UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A Narrative Inquiry into Three Teachers' Experiences of Retiring From Teaching

BY

Judy Nielsen ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry centers on the connection between the participants' stories to live by, their identities, and the landscapes they lived on shortly before and after they retired. I listened to and learned from stories three participants told as their positions shifted from on the school landscape to off the school landscape. Listening to and learning from stories we collaboratively constructed over a year long series of conversations revealed plotlines of their stories to live by. Listening to and learning from stories the participants told assisted in making sense of how plotlines of their stories to live by, their identities, shifted in response to the changed positions. Through this inquiry I came to understand the intimate connection between identity and landscape. Greater understanding of the connection was gained when participants' stories to live by were laid side by side. The laying of stories, side by side, illuminated features of both the school landscape and the retirement landscape and revealed the contribution each feature made to the change in participants' identities. Although landscape features were present before the participants experienced the move from one to the other, not until their position on the landscape abruptly changed did the features become apparent.

In order to represent plotlines of stories to live by, the participants' identities and the impact that certain features of both the school and retirement landscapes had on identities, a metaphor of threads combining to form a weaving is used. Each woven design is a representation of the intimate connection between identity and landscape and provides a visual for each participant's experience of retiring from teaching.

The stories the participants told reveal the way that stories of retiring from teaching can be constructed to serve as a new story of retiring. Their stories are based on experience, not on images of a dominant story, and provide an entry point for teacher voices to be heard. Their stories offer new possibilities for living the story of retiring from teaching.

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CHAPTER I: NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

Coming of Age

Throughout my teaching career, I recall brief moments of reflective thought when I tried to imagine what retirement would be like and what life without teaching would hold. Any thought of retiring from teaching appeared as an event that would take place in the distant future and confirmed the fact that my own retirement was a long way off. Instead of spending time thinking about it, I acknowledged its inevitability and then decided to give it consideration when my time to retire grew near.

From a young age, I came to the understanding that when one's work in life was complete, retirement naturally followed. This understanding came from listening to and watching the older, retired people in my family. My grandparents provided a vision of retirement that centered on the affection and kindness they shared together as husband and wife, as mother and father to their children and as grandparents to their many grandchildren. However, in spite of the unforgettable images of commitment and care they took time to share with others in their retirement, I also recall how their retirement years were plagued with chronic, poor physical health. Although I did not identify my grandparents' retirement in terms of opportunities and challenges, memories of the life they lived as retirees provided me with an image of retirement that held both opportunity and challenge. Opportunities to spend time with loved ones stood alongside the challenge of having to live in poor health. The story they lived became my vision of retirement.

The amount of time I spent thinking about my own retirement was minimal until I turned fifty and realized that I was "coming of age" in terms of this inevitable change in life. Starting at age fifty, I thought more often about the fact that I could retire in five years and began a purposeful search for information that would help make sense of this upcoming life event. Mozina (1988) acknowledged how a process of impression formation regarding retirement occurs throughout a teacher's career and how an increase in intensity of this process seems likely to happen five to ten years before retirement.

As I searched for meaning, I became more observant of others. I began to listen to and watch as an increasing number of colleagues I had shared my professional life with retired. Memories of my grandparents' retirement surfaced again as I imagined my own. Would I have opportunities to spend time with others and pursue personal interests? Would I also deal with the challenge of poor health? What would happen to me as I retired from teaching? Uncertainties about the experience of retiring from teaching caused me to attend to what others experienced as they retired from teaching.

A Search for Meaning

As my wonders about retiring from teaching grew, I probed for answers. I became a pension consultant for the Alberta Teachers' Association and engaged in comprehensive training sessions that provided information about procedures to follow and options open to teachers. A significant part of the training was dedicated to the financial aspects of pension and, although I found that information interesting and useful whenever I spoke with teachers during pension workshops, I continued to have wonders about the experience of retiring from teaching. I wanted to hear teachers' stories.

Thoughts of retiring from teaching remained with me when I enrolled in a summer class at the University of Alberta. As I sat in class waiting for others to arrive, I wondered if I would find answers to my questions about retirement. Jean Clandinin, Janice Huber and Karen Whelan introduced themselves as our instructors and then invited each student to describe what he or she had been working on. I recall feeling encouraged by this invitation to share a work in progress but was somewhat anxious about revealing my interest in teacher retirement. I was unsure of the validity of topic and, as other students spoke of their interests, I watched to see how their ideas were received. Jean, Janice and Karen each spoke words of encouragement, words that offered each student recognition and validation for his or her topic. I began to feel I was in a safe place, a place open to thoughts and wonders.

Then an older man spoke and began by sharing recent events in his life that had influenced his decision to return to university. He indicated that he had just retired from teaching and was interested in pursuing a new path. He also spoke of how his decision to retire and his experience of retiring from teaching had been affected by a number of interesting events and circumstances. I paid close attention to his words as he explained how he had been made to feel. Feeling that he was no longer valued by people in authority at school and knowing that he could no longer tolerate the hassles that accompanied this devaluation, he decided to retire. I shall not forget the pain in his face as he described strong emotions of anger, hatred, bitterness and even debilitation surrounding his leaving (Shaw, 1999). In the moments of silence after he finished speaking, I thought about my own future and how I would experience retiring from teaching. His words caused me to think of teachers who had retired and others who were close to retirement and to wonder about their experience. Several minutes later, I shared my proposed topic with the group. Don Shaw's words gave me strength as I described my wonders about retiring from teaching. When I finished speaking, Jean, Janice and Karen acknowledged my wonders and, from that moment on, any doubts I had about pursuing a study of the experience of retiring from teaching disappeared.

Memories of that summer class and of opportunities to investigate and openly share thoughts remained vivid in my mind. Throughout the following school year I talked with retired teachers and listened as colleagues who were planning to retire shared their experience. In my search for meaning, I applied to graduate school and was accepted as a provisional doctoral candidate. I intended to engage in an investigation that would provide me with a greater understanding of what happens when a teacher retires. The search for information on teacher retirement caused me to redefine my original research focus. To begin with, I was centered on teacher retirement and what a teacher experiences after he or she retires. However, I soon realized that if I were to understand what happens to a teacher after retirement occurs, I needed to follow his or her story of experience

leading up to the event. Therefore, this study focuses on the experience of three teachers before, during and after they retired. It is a study of retiring from teaching.

As I began my search, I encountered a dilemma. Although I was able to locate a significant amount of research information on the general topic of retirement, most of which centers on the financial impact of retirement and its relationship to life (Belanger, 1989), I found little information on the experience of retiring from teaching. Kompf (1991) confirmed a lack of research efforts on teacher retirement. "The years surrounding teacher retirement are largely ignored through study" (p. 479). He indicated that few studies dealt directly with the shifting nature of teachers' experience during and after retirement. For example, Sikes' (1985) discussion of a preliminary framework for teachers' life cycles led up to pre-retirement stages but did not examine them. Huberman (1989) took a similar approach in his analysis of teacher development based on the number of years of experience. Webb and Sikes (1989) presented an analysis of teachers' developmental phases from beginning to near-end of career using chronological age, yet did not push past the usual ages of withdrawal. As my search continued, I found retirement information often centered on the dominant story of retirement that tells of a positive, new life. It is a story told in the media, in retirement seminars, by financial consultants and others who suggest that proper planning will ensure a prosperous retirement. It is a story told by those who look forward to retirement as an "opportunity for a new beginning" (Gee & Baillie, 1999). It is a story told by those who have made a successful transition and is presented with images for others to capture. Although images of the dominant story are presented as representative of people in general and do not refer specifically to teachers, they have implications for retiring teachers.

Images of Retirement—The Dominant Story

One image portrayed a life style free from financial concerns and previous financial commitments. With economic demands, such as raising children, over or greatly

diminished, the story suggests the retiree should be "set." Teachers who were able to make continuous contributions to a pension plan throughout their careers were assured of an adequate income in their retirement years. Policy on teacher pensions states that a full service teacher's pension should be sufficient to allow a teacher to live his or her retirement years in dignity and in a manner that approximates that to which he or she is accustomed. In other words, the retired teacher who has a fully matured pension is able to live without serious money concerns and, therefore, able to capture this image of the dominant story of retirement.

Another image projected by the dominant story of retirement is of world travel and the time to leisurely pursue an abundance of other interests. With the routines and daily commitments to one's career over, the retiree is able to embark on a voyage of discovery into a "new world" and have unlimited time to pursue travel plans and other opportunities that have been "put on hold." Once an energy consuming teaching job is complete, one can look forward to dreams that were set aside for a time when freedom in retirement will allow dreams to become realities. Perhaps a variety of hobbies to explore and favorite ways to pass time await. A new career with opportunities to engage in new learning may be envisioned. Whatever the choice, a retiring teacher could look forward to having time to take a new direction in life.

A different image projected by the dominant story of retirement is of freedom to decide when to retire. This image is offered to teachers through early retirement where a teacher may choose to retire as early as age fifty-five. A pension is available for teachers ten years earlier than the traditional retirement age of sixty-five giving teachers greater choice in when to retire. Added to this choice of retirement timing, employing school boards in Alberta may offer teachers an incentive to resign on, or before, the age of fifty-five. Referred to as an Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP), this plan provides teachers with an amount of money to leave the profession as early as age fifty, and, although the amount varies from one school jurisdiction to another, it provides additional

choice. The decision to retire is portrayed as the teacher's choice and is not limited strictly by age. Freedom of choice, along with monetary incentives to retire in one's mid-fifties or earlier, contribute to the appeal this image of the dominant story of retirement holds.

Another image projected by the dominant story of retirement relates to one's physical wellbeing. The promise of an established life-style, free from serious health concerns in retirement is offered to those who attended to health-related matters in the years before retirement begins. According to Fox (1997), one's health must be safeguarded throughout one's life span if one is to reach retirement with a relatively healthy body. This image is presented to retirees who make wise choices in matters of health and, although it does not relate specifically to teachers, it offers the retiring teacher the prospect of longevity and quality of life in retirement.

Still another image projected by the dominant story of retirement is freedom from job-related stress. Given the complexity of a teacher's work, varying amounts of stress are associated with teaching. Retirement is envisioned as a "haven" where the stress of teaching no longer forces its way into one's public and private life. For those who experience higher than normal levels of stress in their final teaching years, retirement offers an image of relief from negative stress factors as they see themselves leaving the school and its related stress behind.

According to the dominant story, retirement is a financially burden-free, stress-less time of opportunity and growth. It is offered as a new beginning, a change that proposes the "good" life. Images of retirement, however, may or may not mirror retirement life as it unfolds. In the journey from teaching to retirement, from on the school landscape to off the school landscape, life events may or may not fit the plotline of the dominant story. Although most research information on challenges to the dominant story of retiring centers on the general population, implications of these findings could have an impact on retiring teachers.

Images of Retirement—Other Possibilities

When events do not coincide with the plotline of the dominant story of retiring, images are challenged. According to Lo and Brown (1999), who speak of the general population, retirement from work can present a significant challenge for the older population financially, socially and emotionally. Retirement has been identified as a significantly stressful event. Work provides a structured activity, a sense of purpose and daily meaning where energy is channeled into intellectual and creative tasks that offer a sense of satisfaction when they are completed. Without a connection to one's work world however, retirement can be compared to the process involved in suffering a major loss (Pearce, 1993).

Challenges to the dominant story of retiring propose that quality of life will not keep pace with the increase in quantity of life, that retirees may experience a loss of status, that pension income may not be sufficient, that good health may not last, that retirement may offer too much free time, that travel plans may not be realized, that pressure to live a story of successful retirement may be present and that one's identity, one's story to live by, may change. Each challenge is described in the following section.

One factor that could present a challenge to a retiree is his or her age at retirement. Traditionally, teachers were expected to teach until sixty-five. However, with possible retirement at age fifty-five, many teachers retire ten years earlier. In addition to this earlier start to retirement, research indicates that people can expect to live into their eighties. Unfortunately, according to Myers (1990), increases to the quality of life have not kept pace with increases in the quantity of life. Valued qualities of life in one's later years may be lost. Previous sources of satisfaction such as the presence of a spouse, children, social support, income, good physical and emotional health, adequate housing, adequate transportation and independence may disappear.

A second factor that may influence a retiree's life is a loss of status that accompanies the change in personal professional identity. If an individual is not prepared

for a change in identity as he or she leaves the teaching profession, a negative adjustment could occur. If the negative adjustment is not interrupted by the composition of a changed identity that restores a sense of status, a cycle of negative psychological functioning may decrease quality of life even more. (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973).

A third factor that could influence a retiree's experience relates to finance. The image of a financially secure retirement that is not possible to attain could be viewed as a loss. Hardcastle (1981) confirmed that a major task of retirement is the adjustment to a decreased income. The intensity of this loss may not be felt by retiring teachers able to accumulate thirty years of pensionable service. Although there may be concern about how to live with less income, a fully indexed pension is designed to provide a teacher with an adequate income. However, for teachers who were unable to accumulate sufficient years of service, financial security may not be possible. A sense of loss, loss of a life style that others are able to capture, will be felt as a challenge to the dominant story. As a pension consultant for teachers, I engage in conversations with clients about various aspects of their pensions. Many teachers I talk with are women, not surprising considering that approximately two-thirds of the teaching population is female. A significant number of women took time away from their careers to raise families and, therefore, accumulated less pensionable service. When they decide to retire and a pension estimate is calculated, they can expect to receive a pension that is significantly less than teachers able to accumulate sufficient service for an unreduced pension. Furthermore, their pension may be reduced if they withdrew their contributions and did not purchase their service back. A combination of these circumstances could cause stress, guilt and despair. Not only will they have to live with the stress of having less income but also with feelings of inadequacy for not being able to live up to the image of the dominant story of retirement that proposes financial security and independence.

A fourth factor that could influence an individual's retirement relates to health. Retiring and maintaining a state of good health is an image that could be shaken when

unforeseen health problems arise. According to Myers (1990), length of life depends on many factors, the most significant of which is heredity. A family history of serious health concerns could pose a reality check for retiring teachers and their wish for longevity. Perhaps teachers could be forced to give up many of the things they once were healthy enough to do. Their story of retiring may not match the dominant one that projects an image of good health in one's retirement years.

The fifth factor to be considered is the amount of free time a retiree will have. An abundance of time, without scheduled routines, could be a change that appeals to a teacher whose world is consumed with a continual need to meet expectations. Solitude has a welcome appeal when full time teaching demands a world without an abundance of free time. However, when the world of teaching is no longer available and free time may be abundant, the opposite desire may be experienced. Heilbrun (1997) describes the strict bifurcation between world and time that exists when one is engaged in a demanding daily vocation and therefore is said to have "world enough but is short of time" (p. 43). Teaching has the potential to consume every waking hour so that a teacher has world enough, but not time enough. Not only is the commitment intense during the school day, it continues to penetrate time off the school landscape. Effective teaching requires ongoing professional development, leaving little time to pause and entertain possibilities in life outside of school. According to pension consultants, planning for retirement is seldom addressed by teachers during their careers and is often left until the event is close. Conversely, at the time in life when one's teaching/work world no longer exists, there is an abundance of time but also the possibility of empty days. The addition of time will definitely permit the retired teacher to pursue things previously set aside. However, the amount of free time may pose a new source of concern for one who has learned to live with daily routines that leave very little unscheduled time. Unstructured time may be difficult to adjust to given that a teacher may be experiencing this circumstance for the first time in his or her adult life. An all-consuming teaching career may not have allowed

a teacher to develop alternatives and, when faced with unlimited, unscheduled time in retirement, he or she could experience difficulty in adjusting to the change. Having more than sufficient time, but no world, is a factor that could challenge the dominant story of retiring.

The prospect of travel that the pre-retirement image forecasts requires free time. Retired teachers could find themselves with time to travel. However, according to pension consultants, many teachers' travel plans do not differ significantly after retirement from what they were before. Hardcastle (1981) discovered that many people anticipate travel after retirement but unfortunately are unable to because of the reduced income that accompanies retirement. This sixth factor could influence a teacher's story of retirement. If one traveled in pre-retirement years, it would likely continue to be a chosen path. However, if travel had been viewed as an unattainable luxury or simply not a life-style choice, it would likely remain a low priority for that retired teacher.

The lack of financial security and good health could cause difficulties in a teacher's retirement years as could the possibility of challenging emotional issues. This seventh factor may surface or intensify when one leaves the school landscape. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1999), a teacher's story to live by is composed over time and is situated in teaching. The school and the stories a teacher lives as part of his or her school life shape his or her story to live by and play a part in how identity is composed. My personal self-worth is tightly bound to who I am as a teacher, to my identity. Therefore, when my career ends, my identity, my story to live by, will change and this change may have an impact on my emotional state. According to Satir (1988) the transition to retirement involves acknowledgement of an end, grieving the loss, acknowledging positive aspects of what has passed, noticing, acknowledging and welcoming new possibilities. Kerka (1991) explained how personal reactions to change vary. Whether the change is voluntary or involuntary, people may experience a variety of emotions including fear, anxiety and a sense of loss. A person may go through phases

that include immobilization, denial, self-doubt, letting go, testing options, searching for meaning, integration and renewal (Leibowitz & Lea, 1985). Whatever the reaction to change may be, one must recognize its inevitability and the challenge it poses for redefining oneself (Leach & Chakiris, 1988).

Retirement as a time of celebration is the dominant view and the story told in the media, in retirement seminars, by financial consultants and others who suggest that proper planning will ensure a prosperous retirement. Teachers may be able to capture the images of the dominant story and be considered successful retirees. However, when circumstances challenge one's ability to live out this story, society may view that teacher as an ineffective planner and, therefore, unsuccessful retiree. Nelson (1995) explains that when people live stories that do not fit with the dominant images upheld by those who position themselves at the center of what has constituted the communities in which they find themselves living, they may become marginalized. A retired teacher, who cannot afford to take a trip with retired friends for example, may feel marginalized when conversations center on the events of that trip and the enjoyment the group shared. In order to deal with societal pressure to conform to the images of retirement, knowledge of what a retiring teacher experiences and the effect such experience has on identity may assist teachers in making sense of their move to retirement. According to Ekerdt, Hackney, Kosloski and DeViney (2001), the transition to retirement can be ambiguous and blurred and the expectation of retirement can be untidy.

Learning to adjust to a new landscape outside of school involves living through the present situations of readjustment as one draws on past experiences of similar situations, all the while imaging possibilities for how a present action will influence one's future. No matter where a retiring teacher is positioned in relation to the dominant story, his or her lived experiences provide information of what happens to a teacher's identity when he or she retires.

Linking Images to Experience—A Context for Retiring Teachers

Images of retiring and the actual living out of retirement may not be the same. The context in which teachers retire is important to the experience of retiring in that it has an impact on both images and realities of retiring and how they play out. On one hand, a context driven by a lack of funding for example and, the intent to save money on teachers' salaries may pressure older teachers to retire before they are ready. On the other hand, school districts faced with projections of teacher shortages need to develop creative ways to staff schools with competent teachers. Kompf (1991) identified the shortage of qualified and experienced educational personnel as an underlying issue of growing concern faced by many North American educational systems. In this context, retired teachers could be viewed as a valuable resource and have a potential influence on the quality of educational thought and action (Kompf, 1991). "Proper utilization of retirees would provide school districts with experienced teachers and could help alleviate teacher shortage" (Williams, 1992).

Context is a significant part of the experience of retiring from teaching. However, in this research, context is used is a different way. The professional knowledge landscape is the context for a practicing teacher. It is the place where teachers teach. Teachers are "on" the professional knowledge landscape when engaged in the profession of teaching and are said to be "off" the landscape when they leave the school. Being off the landscape means that they are not in direct contact with school but continue to maintain a connection. During the summer, for example, a teacher is said to be "off" the professional knowledge landscape but continues to have a connection to it. The connection is maintained because the teacher will step back onto the landscape when the new school year begins. A retiring teacher will step "off" the professional knowledge landscape when he or she retires and is said to be "off" the landscape. Being "off" the landscape after a teacher retires, however, is not the same as being "off" the landscape for a short time and then returning to it. In order to make the distinction between being "off" the landscape

after one retires and "off" the landscape as a temporary move, the term retirement landscape is used. In this inquiry, retirement landscape defines the context for a retiring teacher after he or she steps "off" the professional knowledge landscape but is not defined in terms of the knowledge context of the professional knowledge landscape. In other words, the practicing teacher is said to be "on" the professional knowledge landscape, the school landscape, before he or she retires and is then "off" the school landscape and "on" the retirement landscape after he or she retires.

Research Focus

In order to gain an understanding of a teacher's experience of retiring, an inquiry into his or her life in pre-retirement times on the school landscape as well as knowledge of his or her life in post-retirement on the retirement landscape is necessary. I propose to gain an understanding of the experience of retiring from teaching as lived and told in three teachers' stories. Using the key terms of teacher knowledge (a narrative that is composed over time and comes out of a life experience), professional knowledge landscape (the context in which teachers teach) and teacher identity (their stories to live by), I intend to offer an understanding of three teachers' stories of retiring. Key terms used in this inquiry are addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II: SITUATING THE RESEARCH

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1999), teacher knowledge, the professional knowledge landscape, a landscape that depicts the context in which teachers teach, and teacher identity have a connection to one another. They describe how teacher identities commingle on the "professional knowledge landscape" and how teacher knowledge, a teacher's "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25), is part of a teacher's identity. In order to understand how knowledge, context and identity are linked they used the term "stories to live by" (p. 4). Stories to live by is the phrase used by Connelly and Clandinin to refer to identity and is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Teacher knowledge, the professional knowledge landscape and teacher identity are described in the following section of this chapter to establish meaning for the term stories to live by, a term central to this study.

Teacher Knowledge—A Way of Knowing

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) write of teacher knowledge as narrative knowledge. Their view of teacher knowledge is based on Dewey's (1938) concept of experience and they (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) describe it as knowledge that is composed as one lives one's life. In Dewey's (1938) view, there are two criteria of experience, continuity and interaction. Continuity of experience exists when "every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes" (p. 35). This modification to self then "affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experience" (p. 35) so that it is a "somewhat different person who enters into them" (p. 35). In addition, "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some ways the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). The criteria of continuity is found in every experience but, according to Dewey (1938), it is the "quality of the present experience that influences the way in which the principle applies" (p. 37). It may "operate so as to leave a person arrested on a low plane of development, in a way which limits later capacity for growth" (p. 38). Or, it may

"arouse curiosity, strengthen initiative and set up desires and purposes" (p. 38) to promote growth so that "present experience will live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28). Although every experience lives on in future experiences, only those that are of such quality that they are conducive to growth are, according to Dewey, "educative" (p. 37). This view of experience is shared by Gergen (1982) as he describes experience as intelligent "if an individual is in continuous motion, altering patterns, abandoning old patterns, creating new ones and in continuous emergence" (p. 67). Dewey's (1938) other criteria of experience, interaction, is the "interplay" (p. 42) between an individual and his or her environment. Interaction involves a "transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 43).

When both criteria are present, experience is educative. Educative experience establishes the ability to learn from experience so that one is able to extract meaning from each present experience in order to prepare for doing the same thing in the future. In other words, educative experience facilitates the conveyance of knowledge from one situation to another so that "what is learned in the way of knowledge in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with situations which follow" (Dewey, 1938 p. 44). This, according to Dewey, is the "only preparation that in the long run amounts to anything" (p. 49).

To talk of experience is to talk temporally and, as Carr (1986) acknowledges, temporality of experience is the way we experience "time as events, things that take or take up time" (p. 25). Carr (1986) explains "that what we experience temporally is not isolated instants, but configurations that extend into the future" (p. 29) and that "actual events are experienced as a beginning, or as an end or as an intervening phase which gets its sense and its place by its reference backward and forward to beginning and end" (p. 48). He explains that "to have an experience is always to be engaged in one of its phases at a time" (p. 42) and describes this beginning-middle-end structure that belongs to

experience as a "strictly temporal ordering principle" (p. 51) where "the present is only possible if it is framed and set against a retired past and an envisioned future" (p. 60). According to Carr (1986), "events we experience, the experiences themselves and the actions we perform consist not as 'mere' sequences but as structured and contoured sequences" (p. 64).

The key to this configured experience, according to Carr, is its narrative character. Experiences are transformed into a story and grasped together by narrative as it organizes and gives coherence to experience. "Narrative coherence belongs to even the most elementary experiences; it is an essential structural feature of any experience" (p. 88). The events of our lives, our experiences, are either "embedded in a story provided by our plans and expectations or, if they are not, we look for and anticipate the stories to which they do, will, or may belong" (p. 90). Clandinin and Connelly (1998) follow Carr's middle ground argument in which the case is made that "when persons note something of their experience, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in a storied form" (p. 154).

Dewey's concept of experience and Carr's recognition of how experience is configured through narrative, along with researchers in the area of teacher knowledge, provide the base for understanding teacher knowledge as narrative knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) take both Dewey's and Carr's perspectives into account as they write:

> Teacher knowledge is that body of convictions and meaning, conscious or unconscious that have arisen from experience; experiences that are intimate, social and traditional and that are expressed in a person's practice. It is the kind of knowledge that has arisen from circumstances, practices and undergoings that themselves have affective content for the person in question. (p. 7)

Connelly and Clandinin (1990), as well as other researchers (Carter, 1993; Elbaz, 1983), argue that teacher knowledge is best understood as narrative knowledge because teachers know their lives in terms of stories. "They live stories, tell stories of their lives,

retell stories with changed possibilities and relive changed stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 12). Narratives of experience that involve the personal reflecting of one's life history, along with the context in which teachers live, form teacher knowledge.

The social context, in which teachers live and teach, provides an arena for the construction of personally meaningful knowledge. This knowledge is a relational knowing (Hollingsworth, 1994) that involves both the recall of prior knowledge and the reflection of what knowledge is present in social settings. "It evokes past memories of stored knowledge transformed into knowing through, not only cognitive, but moral, spiritual, psychological and physical responses" (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993, p. 10). It is knowing through relationship to self and others and generated through a sense of care for self and others. It is similar to Connelly and Clandinin's notion of personal practical knowledge that is narrative knowledge, embodied in persons, embracing moral, emotional, and aesthetic senses, and enacted in situations (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993).

Relational knowing (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993) is in the living of experience and has an intuitive quality. Noddings and Shore (1984) described this intuitive mode of knowing as characterized by the involvement of the senses and as having a commitment, receptivity and empathy. Relational knowing validates the reality of teacher experience by acknowledging its personal, situational and epistemological value (Hollingsworth, 1994). Hollingsworth's concept of relational knowledge constructed through shared understandings in a social context is similar to Lyons' (1990) description of "nested knowing" (p. 162). According to Lyons (1990), students and teachers are considered to have nested, interacting perspectives where "in a unique process, the teacher joins the student in encountering a body of data and interpreting it, a co-joint activity of constructing meaning and potentially new knowledge" (p. 172). Nested knowing acknowledges "the interdependence of students and teachers as knowers

in learning" (p. 173). Together "in learning, teachers and students influence and are influenced by each other's ways of knowing: they are nested knowers" (p. 174).

Ways of knowing that come from experience of relation to self and others provides a way of interpreting teachers' experiential knowing (Lyons, 1990). Lyons credits Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) for their description of different ways of knowing when she writes:

> These researchers identify and describe different epistemological perspectives, suggesting that people can, over time, hold very different views of truth, authority and knowledge as knowers, moving from the notion of one truth or one 'right' way to a notion of the relativism of all knowledge, that is, that all knowledge is a human construction. (Lyons, 1990, p. 163)

Based on a constructivist model, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) describe all knowledge as constructed, where the knower is an intimate part of the known and the truth is seen in the context in which it is embedded. To allow alternate ways of knowing to stand out in one's narrative is to acknowledge its relational, nested, constructed, personal and practical qualities. I used Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) definition of teacher knowledge in this inquiry. Referred to as personal practical knowledge, teacher knowledge is expressed in a teacher's practice so that when he or she is engaged in practice, his or her personal practical knowledge is at work. Personal practical knowledge is defined as:

> A term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

Understanding teacher knowledge as experiential, narrative and relational is a helpful way to conceptualize teacher knowledge of the experience of retiring from teaching. To understand that teacher knowledge formed in the past is the way a teacher

understands the present and prepares for the future facilitated a way of making sense of each participant's experience of retiring. To understand teacher knowledge as formed through a narrative of experience provided a way to understand new knowledge about the experience of retiring. In order to more fully comprehend the knowledge teachers carry, the following section will describe the context in which it is shaped.

The Professional Knowledge Landscape—The Context for Teaching

"The metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape provides a way to contextualize understandings of teachers' personal practice knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 4). This metaphor helps to capture the immensely complex context within schools and is a way for me to understand my teaching life. The place where I teach, my school context, or the professional knowledge landscape is composed of two different kinds of places. The out-of-classroom place refers to the professional places where teachers work with other professionals, while the in-classroom-place refers to the place behind the classroom door with students. Connelly and Clandinin (1995) argue that each place is a distinctively different knowledge context. Both places on the professional knowledge landscape are discussed in the following sections. Attention is also drawn to a different place, a place that is off the professional knowledge landscape, a place where teachers retire.

The Out-of-Classroom Place

The out-of-classroom place exists as I leave my classroom. It is in the staff-room, in the office, in the formal meeting places and in many other places outside of school where educators meet. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe it as existing in professional places with others. Not only is it located in a different place on the landscape but it also is a different knowledge context than the one in the classroom. The knowledge context is one of abstraction and is therefore not "grounded." "There are no people, events, or things—only words cut off from their origins" (p. 10). In this context of

abstraction, knowledge has an "unconditional and depersonalized quality" (p. 11). It is "funneled into the school system for the purpose of altering teachers' and students' classroom lives" (p. 26). It has imposed prescriptions that are "filled with other people's visions of what is right for children" (p. 26) and is delivered through a metaphorical conduit to litter the out-of-classroom place. "Teachers are required to know, understand, discuss, and do something with the knowledge poured into the landscape via the conduit" (p. 10). This knowledge pays little or no credit to teachers' personal practical knowledge.

I am reminded of an incident that happened several years ago when prescriptive knowledge was funneled down onto an out-of-classroom place on my professional knowledge landscape. As part of an initiative to implement whole language, a language arts consultant stated to a group of primary teachers, gathered to discuss curriculum, that teachers must stop teaching phonics in isolation. Although I did not believe that teaching any skill in isolation was meaningful for children, I was bothered by the statement that judged teachers as being guilty of teaching the sound-symbol connection in this one way. I explained I was not convinced that teachers only taught the concept in isolation. I had been previously challenged by students who were unable to learn the concept and had designed a way to teach it within a context of reading and writing processes. I knew I did not teach phonics in isolation. However, when I tried to explain how I taught the connection, the consultant dismissed my explanation and challenged my methodology by stating that all teachers taught that particular concept in isolation. She dismissed all further conversation by insisting that no one in the group would agree with me. The consultant's statement put an end to response. We sat there, silenced by a message delivered via the conduit. Prior to this incident, my classroom experience provided me with possibilities for making my own decisions; moral decisions that allowed me to engage in the construction of knowledge rather than acting as an agent of received knowledge. This encounter, however, shook my belief that I was a knowing person

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). It made me question who I was as a teacher and challenged my story of self as a successful reading teacher.

In telling this story and in using the concept of the professional knowledge landscape to reflect upon it, I recognize that the consultant's directive to teach in a prescribed way was a demonstration of the knowledge context in the out-of-classroom place. Knowledge was seen as "propositional, relational among concepts, impersonal, situation-independent, objective, nontemporal, ahistorical and generic" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 14). Knowledge on the out-of-classroom place is "morally laden as an implied prescription for teachers' actions" (p. 14) and is based on a theory-driven view of practice. It comes from "researchers, policy makers, senior administrators and others who use various implementation strategies to push research findings, policy statements, plans and improvement schemes down the conduit into the out-of-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). The consultant's directive was lodged within the story of theory-driven practice, one that did not recognize my personal practical knowledge. Although I have not forgotten the invasive feeling that this implied prescription had on my professional identity, I was able to focus on my in-classroom place and the making of meaningful curriculum. What draws me to school each day has little to do with the out-of-classroom place and everything to do with the in-classroom place and the children in my care as we learn together.

The out-of-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape has an impact on a teacher's experience of teaching. I wondered what impact the out-of-classroom place would have on a teacher's experience of retiring.

The In-Classroom Place

In contrast to the out-of-classroom place stands the in-classroom place. This is my special place at school, a practical place, a place that credits my personal practical knowledge. In this special place on the professional knowledge landscape, my story to live by continues to be composed. The relationships I share with children are facilitated

by the unique characteristics of the in-classroom place. It is a place where I have been able to establish a caring community. As I tell my story of the in-classroom place, I use Noddings' (1992) concept of an "ethic of care" (p. 111). With intent to motivate and encourage, I strive to maintain community, to promote growth of individuals and to enhance my relationship with students. I try in the in-classroom place to compose a space that mirrors the relationship I shared with my grandparents. Teaching with care, respect and commitment in this special place is my story to live by, a story that matters the most to me. The stories of my grandparents and of my teaching are "the spirit which carries me from day to day" (Sewall, 1996).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) highlight the importance of the in-classroom place by describing it as "a place where teachers teach and where curriculum is made, at least the curriculum that matters as far as students are concerned" (p. 12). Clearly, the in-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape has an impact on a teacher's experience of teaching. I wondered what impact the in-classroom place would have on a teacher's experience of retiring.

If given the choice of just one place to reside on the professional knowledge landscape, I would choose the in-classroom place without question. However, I know I must move back and forth from the in-classroom to the out-of-classroom place. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe what lies on either side of the border separating the two. On one side of the border is a safe place for teaching, the place where children and teachers dwell and where curriculum is made. On the other side is a place of moral persuasion and abstract knowledge. The border between these places is described by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) as semi-permeable. This semi-permeability "creates epistemological and moral dilemmas for teachers" (p. 14). As they cross the border from the in-classroom place to the out-of-classroom places, teachers carry with them their narrative knowledge. However, as they cross over to the out-of-classroom place, they enter a place filled with abstract knowledge, a place filled with a "rhetoric of

conclusions," where knowledge is stripped of the inquiry that credits it (Schwab, 1962). Knowledge in out-of-classroom places speaks of plans, of results and of policy implications that are not grounded in practice. Therefore, crossing from one place to another is difficult for teachers to negotiate because "they cannot simultaneously live and talk a concrete narrative knowledge and an abstract rhetoric of conclusions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 4).

In spite of the constant impact that moving back and forth between places on the professional knowledge landscape has on me, I deal with pressure to conform to its prescribed knowledge by focusing my attention on the in-classroom place and the spirit of stories composed there. In crossing the border from my in-classroom place to the out-of classroom place, I understand the theory-driven story is not to be ignored. I listen to it, receive its knowledge and then cope with its desire to intrude, by refocusing my energy on the dynamics of the in-classroom place. The pressure to live the prescribed mandates of the out-of-classroom place varies in intensity and may be experienced differently by individual teachers. Some experience levels of stress that leave them shaken and defeated, while others appear to gather strength in spite of the stress they experience. If I were no longer able to direct my energies to the in-classroom place, I, too, would be less able to cope with the imposed pressures. I would view retirement as a way to escape, a way out of and off the school landscape.

Off the Landscape

As I contemplate the journey from on the landscape to off, I reflect on past and present experiences in both the in- and out-of-classroom places on the school landscape. Images that come to mind evoke different emotions. My stories of the out-of-classroom place contain undesirable memories while my stories of the in-classroom place are meaningful stories. The in-classroom place is where my story of school began and where the stories of children connect with my own story to live by. My teaching life has been blessed with stories that pull at my heartstrings and sing to my soul. My life is rich with

memories of the in-classroom place on the school landscape and the stories that began so many years ago. It is living in the in-classroom place that has shaped my story to live by.

The professional knowledge landscape, with its in and out-of-classroom places offers challenges to one's story to live by as well as opportunities for one's story to grow. I wanted to listen to, and learn from others, in order to make sense of how the professional knowledge landscape shaped the participants' teaching lives and their experience of retiring from teaching.

Teacher Identity

Just as narrative is the organizing principle of experience, so too does it provide the key to understanding the self who experiences (Carr, 1986, p. 73). "Being a self entails having a story" (Crites, 1986, p. 162) so that my self, my identity is my story to live by. Carr (1986) acknowledged the connection between self and story when he wrote: "The self is the unity of a series of overlapping projections made from different temporal points of view. It is a story-in-the-making" (p. 161). This significant connection between story and self provides me "with a sense of unity and purpose in life" (McAdams, 1990, p. 151). In the following section, I reveal my identity by describing my story to live by and how it strongly connects to teaching.

My Story to Live By

My story of teaching began with my own story of going to school. From a young age, I understood how important the in-classroom place is in the life of a child. Before entering school, my childhood centered in the relationships I shared with my parents, my younger brother and my grandparents. While each relationship was important in my pre-school world, it was my mother who offered me an image of school. She explained that going to school meant taking a big step into a new place, a place of great importance. Often she described it as a magical place where I would learn new and exciting things and, most of all, I would learn to read. I listened to stories of fairies and giants and was

eager to look beyond the pictures to read the stories. Mother said I would be able to read my own stories when I went to school.

After waiting for a long summer to be over, my mother walked me to school on the first day. As we walked to the small two-room school on the opposite side of town, we talked. She put my feelings of uncertainty to rest with encouraging remarks about how I was in for an exciting time. As we entered the classroom, I remember old wooden desks anchored to the floor and set in long rows. The teacher's desk was at the front of the room, close to a wall of windows that stretched to the ceiling. The windows, covered with blinds that allowed light through, gave the room a yellowish, parched tinge. A feeling of enforced quiet and structure permeated the scene. I had not experienced that degree of seriousness before. Other mothers stood holding their children's hands as they lined up to meet the teacher. When our turn came, the teacher greeted us by saying, "This must be Judy." At that moment, I felt a spark of acceptance. However, the spark was soon extinguished. Although I did not understand everything the teacher said to my mother, I got the clear message that, because I was only five years old, I would be allowed to attend school on a trial basis. The teacher would watch to see if I was able to handle the demands and, at the end of the week, she would decide whether I would be allowed to continue or not. The only comment my mother made was that she felt I was ready to start school and would return on Friday to hear the decision. She then took me aside and, as she held me close, explained that she would be back at the end of the day to pick me up. I remember the emotions of that moment. My mother was upset and tried to fight back tears. As she left, our hands and gaze reluctantly parted. I knew I was on my own.

I was a shy child and, after my mother left, no outward display of disappointment was shared. Held-back tears gave no indication of how judged I felt even before I had a chance to prove myself. I survived the week and, although I cannot recall any part of it, I remember Friday when my mother met with the teacher. As I clutched my mother's hand, the teacher explained that I had had a successful week and was welcome to stay. While I

felt relief and slight acceptance, my confidence was shaken. The devastation felt from that first school experience became part of my story to live by as a teacher.

With shattered confidence and doubt in myself as a learner, I was continually challenged when asked to read orally to classmates. I recall feelings of anxiety and dread as teachers called on students to stand and read passages aloud. Feelings of apprehension shook my confidence as my turn grew near. I did not believe I was a capable reader. Then I entered Mrs. Hanson's class. She approached her students with a "no nonsense" look and a tone that reinforced that message. I remember how intimidated I was because she seemed to overlook nothing. I remember being scared to reveal my lack of reading fluency in front of my classmates, let alone in front of her. However, something magical took place that year and, although I still puzzle over just how it happened, I became a confident and competent reader. Mrs. Hanson took me on a journey through lessons that allowed me to fly. I shall never forget her and what she did for me. Even today, as I strive to teach young children to read, her commitment to me is embedded in my commitment to them. No matter how difficult it is for a child to have success in reading, I continue to search for ways to ensure his or her success. Whenever I see a child's frustration or questioning of self because he or she is experiencing difficulty with reading, I recall my childhood experience and set forth to do whatever I can to help. Teaching children to read is at the very heart of who I am as a teacher.

The significance of my personal history and its relationship to my story to live by, my identity, is captured in Greene's (1995) descriptions of original landscapes. According to Greene, "the narrative we shape out of the materials of our lived lives must somehow take into account our original landscapes if we are to be truly present to ourselves" (p. 75). In trying to give an account of our original landscape, we search for these narratives and how they impart "a shape to childhood and a kind of worthwhileness to experience that one may never have known before" (p. 74). Greene explains that "when aspects of the present are infused by materials originating in the past, there is

always a reviewing of the past so that the new experience, that is now enriched, may come to consciousness" (p. 76). One can then "make present the shapes and structures of a perceived world, the shapes of childhood recalled, even though over time they have been layered over with many rational meanings" (p. 77). Consequently, one's presently lived life "will become more grounded, more pungent and less susceptible to logical rationalization" (p. 77). My identity, my story to live by in my teaching is grounded in the shapes of my childhood recalled. Images of the caring relationships I shared with my grandparents and my mother along with memories of the experience I had starting grade one and then later with Mrs. Hanson shaped my story of teaching. At times these images remain subtle while at other times, when dilemmas arise, the images are called upon to restore and confirm my identity. They remain a part of who I am.

Just as experience in life formed and continues to form my story to live by, so too have experiences of school formed my story of teaching. Although the experiences of life and teaching are not exactly the same, they contain similar qualities. They possess common threads that intertwine like fibers in a rope to weave the stories together. As they connect, they form my identity. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) help me to more fully understand the strength of connection between my lived stories and how they interplay to form my identity. "Identities have histories. They are narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds and that may, as narrative constructions are wont to do, solidify into a fixed entity, an unchanging narrative construction or they may continue to grow and change" (p. 95). Each new life experience becomes a part of that story or not depending on how meaningful the connection between the new experience and the established story is. Whether one's identity, one's story to live by is a fixed entity or a changing composition, it is further influenced by its connection to the landscape. The following section will describe the interplay between identity and landscape.

Teacher Identity and Its Connection to the Landscape

In order to understand the conditions that encourage a sense of professional identity, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) explain that "teachers' professional lives take shape in and on the 'landscape' of morally oriented professional knowledge.... This professional knowledge landscape is in intimate interaction with what one might call landscapes of the personal, outside the professional setting" (p. 27). In other words, the everyday personal life of the teacher off the professional landscape influences the life on the landscape just as the teacher's professional life on the landscape influences his or her personal life off the landscape. "Teachers who live their lives on the professional knowledge landscape shape the landscape over time and the landscape shapes them" (p. 28). My story to live by shapes my story of teaching on the professional knowledge landscape just as my story of teaching and connection to the landscape shape my story to live by.

When understood in terms of personal and social narratives of experience, the professional knowledge landscape, with its in and out-of-classroom places, and the landscape of the personal, "weave a matrix of storied influence over one another" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 27). It is from this interactive matrix that I have become who I am as a teacher. A secure sense of teacher identity may be due to the harmonious relationship in the matrix and "knowing where one stands in the matrix of relationships is what makes for a moral identity and the professional confidence that goes with it" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 34). Some stories to live by are composed and sustained over time when they are confirmed in various ways (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). When teachers are acknowledged as knowers, knowers of their situation, of the children, of the subject matter, of teaching and of learning, their stories to live by are recognized and their professional identity is secured. However, when parts of the professional knowledge landscape do not maintain a harmonious relationship, there is a cost to identity. Modifications to one's story, "implied or required by the professional knowledge

landscape, can result in intensely felt dilemmas" (p. 94), dilemmas that challenge one's identity. Clearly, one's sense of identity, confidence and self-worth as a teacher is secured or not by the intimacy of the matrix of relationship on the professional knowledge landscape, where one's story to live by, one's identity and the landscape interplay (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

An example of the connection of identity to the matrix is revealed in a statement made by a teacher who recently retired. He simply stated: "Who I was as a teacher is who I was as a person. I could not separate them, they went together." He made it clear that he was referring to his identity as a teacher on the in-classroom place of the professional knowledge landscape and his relationship to the children there. So vital was this place on the landscape to his story of himself that he was suffering the loss of relationship and identity that had been part of his in-classroom place. Before retirement, he paid little attention to the bond formed between his story to live by and his place on the professional knowledge landscape. Without a connection to the landscape, however, the broken bond became very clear, as did the loss of his teacher identity. For this particular retired teacher, loss of part of the matrix of relationships had an extensive impact on his sense of identity. When he taught, he knew who he was. When he retired, he struggled to re-story his identity.

The relationships I share with children on the professional knowledge landscape are central to my understanding of self so that when I retire and am not a part of the in-classroom place, I may suffer a great sense of loss. My identity and my teaching are interwoven tightly and when the time comes to separate the two, I may experience difficulty in adjusting to that loss. According to Silko (1996), one's sense of identity is ultimately linked with the surrounding terrain, to the landscape that plays a significant role in a story and is part of oneself. "Our human identity, imagination and storytelling are inextricably linked to the land" (p. 21). So connected is the in-classroom place to my identity that, after retirement, when this special world is no longer part of my daily

routine, I will miss my place in it. I will mourn the loss of my identity as a classroom teacher. A colleague who retired from teaching described this loss as a feeling that is similar to the one associated with death or divorce. Feelings of uncertainty at the time of departure from teaching may stem from the loss of what was. The loss of landscape, of one's sense of place, could translate to the need to re-story one's identity. A sense of the magnitude of this loss is revealed by a teacher who questioned: "Do we know who it is we are and what story we are constructing for ourselves if we have no place?" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 72).

When a teacher experiences a change in landscapes from being on the professional knowledge landscape to being on the retirement landscape, his or her identity will change. I wanted to listen to and learn from others in order to understand the impact that the experience of retiring has on teacher identity.

Research Focus Restated

The purpose of this inquiry is to gain an understanding of the experience of retiring from teaching as lived and told in teachers' stories. As I listened to stories, I paid close attention to what others were experiencing and to what I experienced within as I learned from them. In honor of stories told and retold, I used narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Narrative inquiry enabled me to center on stories as a source of knowledge to make sense of three teachers' experience of retiring from teaching. The next chapter will describe narrative inquiry as the methodology of this research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY—NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry is the research methodology guiding this work as it recognizes that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Narrative inquiry enabled me to listen to the teachers' stories of their experiences of retiring from teaching. As teachers engage in storytelling and position themselves in their own stories, credit is paid to their knowledge of teaching as well as their storied lives. The significance of storytelling is expressed as Clandinin and Connelly write:

> Teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories. In this narrative view of teacher knowledge, we mean more than teachers telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers, they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (p. 12)

Understanding Experience Narratively

People live storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). This is the premise for narrative inquiry. It is founded on the belief that human experience is storied experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). "The educational importance of this line of work is that it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). It translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories.

Storytelling is a process that teachers engage in as they strive to make sense of their lives. The telling of and retelling of stories is "fundamental to the human search for meaning" (Bateson, 1989, p. 34). It is a way to create sense, by shaping the "one thing after another" character of ongoing action into a coherent narrative structure with a beginning, middle and end (Mattingly, 1994). Narrative is imposed on bits and pieces of experience to create a coherent sense of meaning spanning past, present and future. When tension or conflict in experience appears, stories are told in the attempt to cope with

events that are hard to reconcile one with the other. Coles (1989) acknowledges the significance of story as he writes:

> Novels and stories are renderings of life; they can not only keep us company, but admonish us, point us in new directions, or give us the courage to stay a given course. They can offer us kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, advisors—offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings. (pp. 159-160)

Conducting a Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquirers work within a three-dimensional research framework. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use Dewey's theory of experience, specifically his notions of situation, continuity and interaction to create a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places" (p. 50). This three-dimensional space allows the researcher to point to "questions, puzzles, fieldwork, and field texts of different kinds appropriate to different aspects of the inquiry" (p. 55). What becomes apparent to the researcher as he or she works within this three-dimensional space is that "this space enfolds us and those with whom we work" (p. 60). Narrative inquiry therefore becomes a relational inquiry as researchers work in the field, move from field to field text, and from field text to research text.

In a search for meaning and in a spirit of collaboration, a narrative inquiry begins in the field where the researcher finds himself or herself "in the middle of a nested set of stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63). A nested set of stories includes the researcher's own story and search for meaning as well as the stories the participants tell. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "when narrative inquirers are in the field,

they are never there as disembodied recorders of someone else's experience. They too are having an experience, the experience of the inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore" (p. 81). In other words, they are in the "parade they presume to study" (p. 81).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that "there are tensions and dilemmas in studying the parade of which we are a part" (p. 81). In other words, "when researchers enter the field, their experience shifts and changes, constantly negotiating, constantly re-evaluating, and maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever changing landscape" (p. 71). Inevitably, "narrative inquirers experience this tension, for narrative inquiry is relational" (p. 81).

For narrative inquirers, keeping the three-dimensional space in mind is helpful when in the field. Three-dimensional space will open imaginative possibilities for inquirers that may not as easily be seen without the idea. However, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) address the issue of the "ambiguity of working within an open and boundless three dimensional inquiry space in the making of field texts" (p. 95). They express the need for researchers to be aware of where they and their participants are placed at any particular moment in the three-dimensional space as field texts are composed.

Field texts are formed from the narrative representations of the experiences as heard by the researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). However, field texts are not merely "raw data" from which to construct interpretations. Field notes, or as Clandinin and Connelly (1994) write, field texts, are also the products of a fundamentally interpretative process that is shaped by those involved in the inquiry. The relationship that researcher and participant(s) share is embedded within the formation of field text and central to its creation.

Field texts take different shapes and can be interwoven one with another. Davies (1996) combined various forms of field text in her study of how teachers negotiate team

teaching relationships. She began her narrative inquiry with autobiographical writings of her own school experience and then used teacher stories, research journals, oral histories, family stories, field notes, conversations, researcher letters to participants, participants' letters, stories of families and documents in an interwoven way. Field texts can also take the form of research interviews, photographs, memory boxes, personal-family-social artifacts and life experiences. Whatever form field texts take, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize the importance of positioning field texts within the three-dimensional space because "their position has consequences for the epistemological status of the texts and, ultimately, of the research texts that draw from them" (p. 118). "Without careful positioning of field texts, and our explicit acknowledgement of how they are positioned, the research texts ultimately constructed from them are endlessly open to unanswerable questions and criticisms about knowledge claims being made and meanings generated" (p. 118).

In the move from field text to research text, "there is no one bringing together of the field texts into research texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). In other words, narrative researchers frequently find themselves engaged in writing a variety of different kinds of interim texts, texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final research texts. Interim texts are written at different times in the inquiry process and for different purposes. They can also take different forms that include letters, interpretive accounts, paper presentations and written storied accounts of particular events that are developed around an idea or concern.

In the final move to research texts, field texts or interim texts are reconstructed as research texts. In doing this, the researcher seeks meaning of the narrative and its significance for others and for social issues. The field texts or interim texts are analyzed for tensions, threads, themes and patterns either within or across the various stories pertinent to the research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). The outcomes of the analysis are presented in research texts.

Conducting This Narrative Inquiry

In a search for meaning and in a spirit of collaboration, this narrative inquiry unfolded within a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The three-dimensional space allowed me to move inward as I addressed my own internal conditions and feelings. It permitted me to move outward and to take into consideration what was happening in the context of this work. It allowed me to move backwards and forwards from past to present and into the future as I tried to make sense of my own journey to retirement through the participants' stories of retiring from teaching. In a similar way, the three-dimensional space provided a framework for describing the participants' experience of retiring. It allowed participants to describe feelings when I asked each of them to move inward. It took existential conditions into consideration when I asked each of them to move outward and describe the environment. It permitted them to move from their pasts to the present and into the future as they recalled past experiences, described the present and storied themselves into the future. The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space also provided participants with a way to describe the "concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51). In other words, they were able to describe the place, the landscape(s) on which they lived. The following sections describe how I used narrative inquiry as a research methodology.

Being in the Field

As researcher in the field, I found myself "in the middle of a nested set of stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63) where my own story of teaching and search for meaning about the experience of retiring from teaching became nested with the participants' stories of retiring from teaching.

I met Frank a year before our conversations began when a mutual friend introduced us. Although our conversation was short, he indicated plans to retire from teaching the following year and spoke of how he looked forward to the event. The story he told and the words he spoke stayed with me. I wanted to hear more about what he was

experiencing as he retired from teaching. A year later, we began conversations. Conversations with Frank revealed his story to live by, a story that told of his experience of retiring from teaching.

At the time conversations began with Frank, I met Lorraine. A colleague suggested that I contact her because she was in her last year of teaching and planned to retire. I called to introduce myself and when I asked if she was willing to share her experience of retiring, she agreed. Our conversations began shortly after that first meeting. Conversations with both Frank and Lorraine began in the spring, 2000 and continued for over a year. I intended to stay in conversation with them for a period of time that began approximately six months before they retired and lasted until six months after they retired. The timeframe was extended as we continued to meet until the one year anniversary date of their retirement.

In January 2001, I began to meet with the third participant in this study. Noreen and I had been acquaintances for a number of years and when she announced her retirement, I asked if she would be willing to share her story of retiring and she agreed. Our conversations began six months before she retired and continued until January, 2002, six months after she retired.

As I journeyed through the research field, I experienced shifts and changes. The relationship the participants and I shared shifted and changed as I struggled with asking them to take time to meet, knowing how busy their lives were and how time consuming our conversations became. I wanted to hear their stories but was sensitive to their feelings and the difficulties they were experiencing at school. Their struggles became my struggles. Not only, were there changes in the relationship the participants and I shared, I experienced change also in the focus of the inquiry.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) helped me to understand the shifts and changes I experienced in their explanation of the need to constantly negotiate, maintain flexibility, constantly re-evaluate and be open to an ever-changing landscape. Negotiations and a

willingness to maintain flexibility became part of the relationship I shared with the participants in order to construct a mutually agreed upon space between us. Constant re-evaluation and being open to an ever-changing landscape enabled me to redefine the focus of the inquiry, not on teacher retirement, but on the move from teaching to retirement, on retiring from teaching.

From Field to Field Text

Each time I met with the participants, I taped our conversations. Conversations with Frank began in April, 2000 and took place four different times before he retired in June. Although we spoke on the telephone several times over the summer, we met only once. In the fall, 2000, we continued to meet for four taped conversations. Conversations with Lorraine took place within a similar timeframe. We began in April, 2000 and met four times before she retired. I also attended a year end celebration in her honor and, although we were not able to have a conversation, I took notes from her speech. A summer meeting was not possible given the circumstances in Lorraine's life. Instead, I called several times to offer support and maintain contact with her. We met early in September, 2000 and on four different occasions to tape conversations. After the six-month period of being retired came to an end, I met with both Frank and Lorraine approximately one year after they retired. Noreen and I began conversations in January, 2001. We met four different times before she retired. I also attended her retirement celebration in May, 2001. We met once during the summer and then four times in the six-month period after she retired and approximately one year after she retired.

Conversations involved mutual listening and questioning and creating openings for the telling of stories, stories of teaching and retiring. Schulz (1997) explains that "In the practical working out of an ethic of caring, conversation and relationships are critically linked. Just as friends turn to conversation as a way of dealing with problems and coming to understand each other, conversation is also the characteristic method of research that seeks to understand people's understandings" (p. 86). Throughout our

conversations, I asked each participant a general question about "how things were going" but did not intend to prompt specific answers. Instead, I often remained quiet in order to hear their voices and honor their stories. Taped conversations became the field texts in this inquiry.

As I transcribed each conversation, I continued to check with the participants whenever the meaning of their spoken words were unclear or needed clarification. Transcribing and reading taped conversations allowed me to become fully involved and yet step back to see my own story in the inquiry. For example, when Lorraine described her last day at school and the emotional impact of saying good-bye to students and parents, I acknowledged her sorrow but then thought of my own retirement and of the day I will say good-bye to my teaching career. "Being in the field allows intimacy. Composing and reading field texts allow one to slip out of intimacy for a time. This movement back and forth between falling in love and cool observation is possible through field text" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 82). The meaning of this back and forth movement became very clear to me when I stepped in to offer Frank condolence over his treatment by others at school and then back to try to understand why he felt marginalized by others.

I include a sample of the initial field text to give a sense of the nature of the conversations the participants and I shared. This sample is taken from my first meeting with Frank, when he described how he felt his principal was treating him.

Judy: *Perhaps now that your principal knows that you are retiring at the end of June, he may be a little kinder to you.*

Frank: *I don't think so. He has had plenty of opportunities. I do the science fair and I spent a whole night there, with presentations and everything on exhibit. He was there for the awards, and there was an opportunity for him to say: "We thank Frank for all of the work he has done over the past two years." He never said a*

word. That was an opportunity to hand it back to me and if the others, the parents, saw him do that, they might think more of me and that maybe I'm okay.

Judy: *He did nothing?*

Frank: *He did nothing to try to support me as a teacher to get the parents off my back.*

(Taken from Transcript with Frank, April 20, 2000)

From Field Text to Interim Text

As noted earlier in this chapter, a narrative inquirer may engage in "writing a variety of different kinds of interim texts, texts situated in the spaces between field texts,. and final, published research texts" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 133). As I struggled with how to compose a text that would honor voice as told in taped field text and yet move towards research text, I focused on Frank's stories. I originally planned to be in a research relationship with each participant for one year but was unsure of how that timeframe would be depicted. However, as I looked carefully at Frank's story, it became clear to me that his experience of retiring from teaching took place in three main phases that included a pre-retirement period, the summer following his retirement and a post-retirement period. This timeframe helped me to capture his retirement experience and became a model for representing the experience of the other participants.

Interim text in this inquiry was constructed around a pre-retirement time, a summer time and, a post-retirement period and then developed in two parts. Part one of the interim text was composed from transcribed conversations and presented in a chronicled story form. Each participant's experience of retiring from teaching was written as a detailed and sequential story of his or her life. The detailed story included experiences on the school landscape before each one retired that told a story of their teaching life, a pre-retirement story. The detailed story also told of events of the summer following retirement and then of experiences on the retirement landscape. In honor of individual experience, each participant's detailed story was retold as his or her shifting story to live by. The retelling of the detailed story became the second part of interim text

and represented each participant's story to live by. Embedded within both interim texts was the relationship I shared with each participant as we negotiated the texts and I honored their input. Part one and two of the interim texts for each participant appear in Chapters IV, V and VI.

From Interim Text to Research Text

As I began to reconstruct interim text into research text, I searched for the meaning in the experience of retiring from teaching and of its significance for others. I looked for "tensions, threads, themes and patterns either within or across the various stories pertinent to the research" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). In my search for meaning, I laid the participant's stories of retiring side by side. The laying of stories side by side not only exposed features of both the school landscape and the retirement landscape, this action revealed the influence features of the landscape(s) had on the participants' identities and provided the base for the composition of research text. Research text in this dissertation appears as descriptions of the impact that features of both the school landscape and the retirement landscape had on individual participant's identities. It includes descriptions of the impact that the change in landscapes had on individual identities. In addition to descriptive passages, a metaphor of threads combining to form individual weavings and a visual representation of combined threads is provided in Chapter VII.

Ethical Considerations

Narrative inquiry is a personal experience method that not only acknowledges the centrality of the researcher's own experience by including his or her tellings, livings, relivings and retellings, but focuses on the importance of the relationship among the researcher and the participants. The dynamic potential of collaboratively constructed conversations is marked by equality among participants where, according to Clandinin and Connelly (1998),

> The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that will take the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview.... Indeed, there is a probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other. (p. 168)

The research relationship is collaborative, so that all participants, researcher and practitioner, see themselves as participants in the community (Noddings, 1986). Voice is honored in the way that Britzman (1989) emphasized its importance as:

> Meaning that resides in an individual and enables that individual to participate in a community.... Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all part of this process.... Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of his/her experience and hence to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (pp. 144-146)

When voice, space, relationship and time are part of the collaborative setting and the social process, there is value for researcher and practitioner, theory and practice (Noddings, 1986).

In order to honor the participants, I built relationships with them. Only when they understood that care, respect and commitment bound me to the relationship we equally shared, did we tell authentic stories. Research conducted by Schulz (1997) helped me to understand a collaborative inquiry relationship and how "there is no place in such a relationship for the researcher as objective, distant, or detached observer. Instead, the researcher becomes an engaged, involved co-participant in the community of study" (p. 84).

As the relationship built and through trust continued to grow, I was continuously aware and sensitive to the risks involved. Metzger's (1992) words provided a caution to me.

> When we are told that something is not to be spoken about, we mean that this something should not exist—should not, cannot, must not, does not exist. In that moment, our reality and, consequently, our lives are distorted; they become shameful and diminished. In some way, we, too, understand this to mean that we should not exist. To protect ourselves, we, too, begin to speak only of the flat world where everything is safe,

> commonplace, and agreeable, the very small world about which we can all have consensus. Soon we don't see the other worlds we once saw, for it is difficult to see what we are forbidden to name. (p. 32)

Ethical matters in a narrative inquiry shift and change throughout and therefore need to be considered over the entire process. Given that narrative inquiry involves "real" people and not just text, I paid attention to the aftermath of research (Lightfoot, 1983). I understood that as a narrative inquirer, I owed care and responsibility to the research participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998).

Ethical considerations for this inquiry included securing permission from the participants, ensuring that there be no potential for physical or mental harm and informing them about what information would be used and in what way. They were informed of their rights to withdraw from participation at any time and, if they desired anonymity. Confidentiality was preserved at all times. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explain:

> As we compose our research text, we need to be thoughtful of our research participants as our first audience and, indeed, our most important audience, for it is to them that we owe our care to compose a text that does not rupture life stories that sustain them. (pp. 173-174)

The participants chose to use their own names in this inquiry. They understood that risks were involved but were willing to put their own signatures on the interim texts. They took ownership of their stories of retiring from teaching not only because they were willing to have their voices heard but also because they understood from the research relationship we shared that I would articulate, reflect and notice what was going on with them. Other names of teachers are pseudonyms.

Looking Ahead

Listening to teacher's stories of retiring, taping conversations as field text, constructing interim text from the field text and, then reconstructing interim text into research text provided me with greater understanding of the connection between landscape and identity when a teacher retires. The interplay between landscape and

identity and the change to identity in response to the change in landscapes is presented in the following chapters. Chapters IV, V and VI present the interim text. The first phase of the interim text is organized under headings that indicate a story of the participants' teaching lives, a pre-retirement story, living into retirement and living into the future. The second phase of the interim text follows the first and presents each participant's story to live by as a retelling. More specifically, Chapter IV is Frank's story of retiring from teaching, Chapter V is Lorraine's story and Chapter VI is Noreen's story. Chapter VII contains research text in which I first identify and describe each participant's identity from the stories they told before they retired. A description of the change to his or her identity after retirement is then provided. With each participant's identity made visible through the stories they told, I lay their stories side by side. This action exposes features of the landscape(s), the school landscape and the retirement landscape, that contributed to the change in each participant's identity after he or she retired. This action not only exposes features of the landscape(s), it reveals particular features that repeated in each participant's story of retiring. A description of the impact that repeating features of the landscape(s) had on each participant's identity is included. Chapter VIII reveals what I learned from this inquiry and Chapter IX draws a conclusion by posing wonders that could provide additional insights into a teacher's experience of retiring.

CHAPTER IV: FRANK'S STORY OF RETIRING FROM TEACHING

Chronicling Frank's Experience of Retiring

Frank's Story of His Teaching Life

From the time Frank was a young boy, he knew he wanted to be a teacher. This desire was challenged, however, by a teacher who told his parents he was not a capable student and would not experience success in life.

> When I was in grade six, the teacher told Mom and Dad that I would never turn out to be anything because I was too stupid. I was out in the hall when the interview took place and overheard the conversation. I'll never forget that comment or the teacher who made it. I can still see his face. I was upset but you know, it did something to me. It made me strive harder to prove him wrong. When I finished high school I didn't go into teaching right away. It wasn't until about twenty years later, after I had worked at different jobs that included photogrammetry, owning my own business and driving truck, that I started my first university course. My wife was completing her education degree at the time and suggested that I take a class with her. I didn't think that I was university material but I had always dreamed of becoming a teacher, so I joined her. I can still remember thinking about my grade six teacher and how I would have loved to contact him to show him that I did make it to university and that I could get a degree, just like he did. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

When I asked Frank if he had ever contacted his grade six teacher, he laughed and said that although he would have liked to, he never did. However, the teacher's comment had an impact on his life. He was determined to become a teacher and with encouragement from his wife, Frank continued his education.

> Even though it was my wife who talked me into going, I was hooked into taking courses. I didn't get great marks in the first course but I got an A in the next one and that got me rolling. So I quit my job, became a caretaker in the evenings and went to university full-time during the day. I graduated in 1979 when I was thirty-nine years old and got my first teaching job that fall. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

He described fond memories of his first years in teaching when he and colleagues worked together. The relationship he shared with them was "as close as a family" (Conversation, April 20, 2000). "Teachers cared about each other, the administration was supportive and teaching was a reward" (Conversation, April 20, 2002). Frank taught for

five years and then decided to seek a position in school administration. He had been encouraged by a university professor who spoke of his administrative potential and so he enrolled in a Masters of Education degree program. Two years after he completed the program he became an administrator.

Frank felt he had traveled far beyond where he ever thought he could go in his education and was very proud of his accomplishments. He attained two university degrees, experienced success as a classroom teacher and became an assistant principal. He enjoyed his role in administration where he could be an advocate for teachers. Unfortunately, after four years, he left his position. This move challenged his being.

> They put me out of administration because I reported one of the teachers to social services for abusing kids. A grade six teacher was sexually touching children but because I went to social services without notifying the Board first, I was put out of my position. The Board most certainly did not like that because I was airing their dirty laundry to another group of people. They liked to deal with that stuff on their own. They said that I went public with the information and they were not happy. And, it is just ironic how the next year I was railroaded out, I was told that I was incompetent. They treated me badly. Towards the end of the year, at Easter, they gave me the choice that either I resign or that they would put me out. And so, under duress, I resigned and went back into the classroom. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

The impact of being "put out" of his administrative role was devastating but he returned to the classroom prepared to teach. Unfortunately, the image he held of himself as a teacher was challenged. In the following ten years, Frank experienced significant change in teaching, change described as a "decline." Twenty years after he became a teacher, Frank left teaching to retire. He felt he could no longer deal with demands at school nor was he willing to continue to try. Even though he knew that retirement would offer its own challenges, he was not willing to continue to teach.

Frank's Pre-Retirement Story

I met Frank about a year before his retirement. A mutual friend who knew that I was interested in talking to retiring teachers introduced us. I asked Frank if he would be willing to share his experiences of retiring as the time grew near. He responded quickly by saying he would be more than willing to participate. Although I spoke with him several times on the phone during the following months, our conversations formally began in the spring, 2000. We met in April, 2000 and Frank started to share his experiences of retiring.

When our conversations began, Frank spoke first of his concern over the financial aspect of his upcoming retirement and of how he would have to learn to live with less. Financial matters continued to be a topic of concern throughout his pre-retirement story. However, in spite of his concern and fear over not having enough money to live on in retirement, Frank's decision to retire earlier than he planned was directly influenced by challenges other than money. Teaching had changed for Frank and these changes caused him to feel anger and pain over the loss of what was and what could have been. As I listened to Frank's story of pre-retirement, other topics appeared. Changes in the context of teaching appeared as a common topic throughout. Lack of support from administration inside and outside of school constantly appeared. Silencing of his voice also surfaced as a topic in his pre-retirement experience. Each topic was exposed as a concern in his unfolding story of retiring and even though one appeared stronger at times than another, they were all clearly visible throughout the conversations.

Topic 1: The Changing Context in Frank's Pre-retirement Story

Frank spoke often of how teaching had changed from the time he started. The first ten years of his career were far different than the last ten, a period of time he identified as being characterized by significant change in context.

A: Lack of Support and Increased Demands

In our first conversation, Frank spoke of how teaching changed because of the lack of support and increased demands he felt as a teacher.

> That's the way it is in teaching today. Over the last ten years everything has changed. Prior to ten years ago, we had help with testing. But now, every year there is more to do and they have taken away all of our supports. They extended the school day and gave us more to do everyday. We used to get professional days during school time but now we are told how to use that time and they just keep changing it. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Frank viewed his retirement as a way to escape from a career that had changed.

> I'm looking forward to retirement. I really am because things have changed. I've come from a place where fifty percent of my teaching was great. The first ten years of teaching were great but the last ten have been downhill all the way. And that is where education is sitting. There are so many demands placed on teachers but they are not given the support they need to meet those demands. I have five good years of teaching left in me yet and I feel healthy enough that I could survive but I know that I can't. I will not risk my health to stay. My health is more important than that. I would rather go out and drive truck than teach. The demands are too great. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

B: Lack of Respect For Teachers and the Teaching Profession

The combination of a loss of support and increased demands was part of the reason Frank decided to retire. His decision was also influenced by his sense of a decline in respect for teachers, a decline that challenged him.

> Teachers had such respect in the community because they were recognized for the good they did for others. I could give what I had to someone else and at the end of a day, I could feel good because I helped someone. Now, at the end of a day, I feel like…I survived another day and I wonder what is going to happen tomorrow. And that is wrong. Teachers bring themselves to the teaching profession and that is what is really unique about education. As soon as others dictate how teachers should teach, uniqueness disappears and the individual personalities of teachers are lost. Without respect, a teacher's uniqueness disappears. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Frank spoke often of how a lack of respect challenged his teaching in our next conversation. He believes there is little respect for teachers when they are not allowed the

freedom to teach in their own unique ways. He was angry because he felt that the influence of disrespect was part of the reason he chose to retire.

> Teachers are planting seeds to help someone. I guess that is a teacher thing. That's what teachers are about, helping kids think things out. But when people try to strip you of the basics of what a teacher is, and that is different for each person, when they try to strip you of who you are as a teacher and try to change how you do things because they do not agree, then you take the teacher out of the teaching. Teachers have to teach in their own way. They have to do it their way.
>
> I shouldn't be leaving teaching because of the stress and the lack of respect. That really angers me. A year ago I made the decision to retire and I was angry because I felt that I had to leave teaching. I should have been able to last another 5 years. To leave after 20 years and with the pension I will be getting has put a lot more pressure on me to have to do something else when I retire. (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

The decline in respect was noticeable as he recalled a time when he was overwhelmed by respect from others.

> When I got up to speak at the retirement party that my family put on in my honor, I spoke of the rewards of teaching. The biggest stroke, the most important reward that I have ever received in teaching, is when a student came up to me after he had graduated from university and said: "Mr. Kelly, remember when…." (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

Frank was unable to finish the sentence because he was overcome by emotion. Through tears, he explained what teaching meant to him.

> Those are the simple things. Those are the things that keep you hanging in there. I often think of how cruel it is that we have to deal with that other stuff, when our hearts are not in that other stuff. Teaching has always been the simple rewards, a simple thank you for the little things we do for kids. The highlights have been when people have come to me and thanked me for something I did for them ten years ago. It makes you say, "God, this was worth it." Those are the highlights and the wonderful times. (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

In our June conversation, Frank spoke again of the impact that this changed context had on him.

> I can't imagine that I will be any happier than when I retire and say good-bye to the disrespect. I had a conversation recently with a retired friend and said to him: "What I get from seeing you is that in retirement, my

smile will come back." And he said, "Yes Frank, it comes back." But you know, it is sad that you have to give up your job to get your smile back, to feel happy. It shouldn't be like that. This is supposed to be a proud profession but it's not proud anymore. Everyone dumps on you. Nobody appreciates what you do for the kids. It's really sad. The biggest hurt in leaving teaching comes from the lack of respect and appreciation for our profession. We are treated like dogs. Everybody and anyone thinks that they can do our work. I wonder how many of these parents who complain could come into my classroom and deal with the attitudes of some of these kids for 200 days a year. They couldn't do it. They have no idea. It's not just one kid, we've got 27 to 30 kids to deal with and all of their different attitudes and personalities. And, you have to treat them all with respect. It is right to treat them with respect because we are the adults. There is nothing wrong with that. But it is hard when anyone can say whatever they want and we must be respectful of them. When they are disrespectful and complain about the way we teach and intend to make teachers teach in a way that is not their own, they take the heart out of teachers. They destroy teaching as we know it. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

C: Lack of Collegial Care and Support

Frank experienced the changed context in another way, a lack of care and support from colleagues.

> When I started teaching, we had a ball. Everybody cared about each other. It's not like that anymore. It's not the same. Teaching is not fun any more. If it was like that today in school, I wouldn't be going now. I wouldn't have to go. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

> There is nobody to help you. There are no support groups for teachers and there are lots of teachers who need support and care. (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

> It is going to feel great to walk out of the school but it is too bad that so few care. I have left schools in the past and have just cried and cried over the people that I would be missing. But not anymore. The only people I am close to are my two teaching buddies, one other teacher who teaches next to me, the caretaker and the other teacher who is retiring. Other than that, there are fifty people on staff but there are only about five who really care about me. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Frank felt concern over the lack of care and support from colleagues until the day he left. He spoke of how different things were for a friend who retired than they were for him. Although he did not say that he wished that his leaving could have been more

meaningful, the story he told of his friend's retirement gave a clear indication that Frank yearned for that kind of collegial support.

> I remember when my friend retired, that was the toughest. He was a principal but he was also a friend and it was really hard to see him go. On the last day of school, I said good-bye to him on the way into school in the morning and told him that I wouldn't see him again that day because I didn't want to upset him. He told me to stay away from him because I was too emotional and that I would get everyone crying. We laughed and in jest, he told me to just go out the back door of the school so that we wouldn't have to see each other and get emotional. It was all done out of love. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Frank's retirement was recognized by some colleagues but not by others and the lack of support he felt concerned him. He requested the staff not have a retirement party in his honor in order to spare them the time and expense of organizing such an event. Instead, his family held a retirement celebration in his honor several months before the actual date and invited all members of his school staff. However, not many teachers from his staff were in attendance. Even though he spoke of how busy people are, and that he knew that those who attended were the ones who had the time to come, he noticed the lack of support from others and was disappointed that only a few colleagues seemed to care enough to attend.

Frank was upset by the difference between the way some staff members were acknowledged, while he was not. He felt hurt over the lack of recognition for his retirement as he spoke in May, 2000 of how his principal was acknowledged for leaving the school to relocate in another but he was given no recognition for retiring. Hurt over the lack of support from his colleagues stayed with him when he spoke again at the end of June about the principal's leaving.

> The staff treated him with more dignity and respect in leaving a school than the other teacher who is retiring and I got as retirees. My friend told me this week that he didn't want a big fuss and neither do I. When a big fuss is made over a principal who is just leaving a building and you have people retiring, there is a big difference. The staff had a breakfast for him and gave him very expensive golf clubs. He got an all expense paid weekend to the Kananaskis and four rounds of golf. And all this and we

didn't even get a thank you. Even at the luncheon that the parents put on, there was no mention of us at all. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

When I asked Frank if there would be other times that his retiring would be recognized, he indicated he would not attend any other celebrations. He felt he had not been acknowledged by many of the staff at his retirement party nor was his retirement mentioned during the time the principal was honored. He was not willing to participate in any other celebrations.

> The school is having a year-end party on Wednesday for the grade six students and then one for staff right after that. But I have a dental appointment and I'm not going to either one. It's my last year and it should be a joyous and fun thing, but it's not. So, the other teacher who is retiring and I are not attending. Neither one of us are worried about it because there is only one more week left and we can get through it. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

His decision to set a dental appointment for the last Wednesday of the school year, the day he may have been given recognition by staff, was partly a result of not being recognized previously. Although he spoke of not knowing how long his appointment might take, he indicated that he had no intention of going to the year-end party. When we met on the last day of school, just two days after the staff party, Frank spoke again about the event.

> Really, I had no intention of being there. And the other teacher who is retiring didn't go either. He left at noon because his legs were bothering him too much. He said that he kind of exaggerated because he didn't want to be there either. So, the retirees weren't there. That says something I would say. If people cared, we would have been there. I would have come back for a staff that cared. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

D: Student Disrespect and Parental Harassment

Another change Frank experienced came from the student disrespect and parental harassment he felt certain students and their parents posed. He identified a change to the School Act as the cause for a decline in student respect and an increase in parental complaints.

> About ten years ago the School Act changed and parents were encouraged to have more input and involvement in their child's education. I agree that

> they should have input but things really got out of hand. Parents were allowed to enter classrooms and tell teachers how and what they could teach. Then if a parent was dissatisfied, they voiced a complaint to the school board who would jump to meet the demand because they were afraid of losing grant money. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Frank experienced problems with both parents and students when he insisted that students learn to take responsibility for their own actions. He tried to facilitate experiences for students that would give them practice in taking responsibility but felt criticized and, to some extent, threatened for trying to teach in this way.

> Parents don't know where the line is. They don't know what they can say and what they shouldn't say. They make comments like "you are picking on my child or you are more fair to the girls than to the boys." So you can see where the aggressiveness of the kids is coming from. It is coming from their parents. They have so little respect and that is so wrong. When I went to school and something went wrong, my parents would say, "What did you do Frank?" But now, they say, "What did you do to my child?" I remember an incident at the beginning of the year. A couple of kids weren't doing their own work and they weren't taking notes. Their parents got upset with me because their kids didn't have the notes from class. They wanted me to give them my notes. When I told them that it was their child's responsibility to listen in class and that they could get the notes from a buddy, the parents were very angry with me.
>
> Last October, I gave the students a test and some of them got very low marks. When two parents came in to complain about the marks, I tried to explain to them that their children needed to pay closer attention in class. I explained that the test was set up as a signal to show students that if they didn't study, they wouldn't do well on the exam. But, the parents said that the reason why their children didn't do well was my fault. And they were very persistent. They came to see me after school and wouldn't let me out of my classroom. I tried to explain that I didn't have time to meet right then and could meet with them in the morning. At first, they wouldn't hear of it. Finally, they did agree and we met the following morning. They suggested that I re-teach the unit. When I asked them what unit I should skip in order to re-teach, they had no answers but continued to challenge. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

The topic of student behavior and the lack of parent support came up again as Frank explained why he was leaving teaching.

> Some kids are so rude. They just laugh at me in the hallways. They say, "Hi Mr. Kelly" and then they laugh at the top of their lungs. It is really humiliating. It is so arrogant and mean. I would like to stop to talk with

> them, but I'm not wasting my time. As soon as you do that they know that they have got to you. So I just keep walking and ignore them. It really hurts when I think of the really great things I did for those kids. They just don't appreciate it. They are so self-centered that nothing you do is good enough for them. The more you do, the more they expect. They don't say thank you for the extra work you do and neither do the parents. Instead, the first thing parents do is complain about how you did it. It really bothers me how critical parents are when they say that I am not caring. To be perceived as a non-caring teacher is very upsetting. And right now, I find that the combination of arrogant kids and criticism from parents is pretty hard to ignore. (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

Concern over a lack of parental support influenced Frank's willingness to trust. He was weary of how far parents would go to make sure that their voices were heard. He spoke of how some parents had gone beyond the school level to complain by taking "teachers to the Board" (Conversation, May 15, 2000).

Concerns over student disrespect and parental harassment continued. For example, Frank was reprimanded by his principal over a parent complaint about how he was not doing enough for kids. This comment angered Frank and he voiced frustration by stating that he was "not going to change things to satisfy a parent if it was not right for him as a teacher." He was willing to talk with them but was not willing to be told what to do (Conversation, June 25, 2000).

In addition to being angry, Frank was frustrated and hurt by the comment. In order to cope with these feelings, he reacted.

> After the principal "smoked" me with that comment a parent made about not doing enough for kids, I was having trouble sleeping. At about 2:00 Sunday morning, I was tossing and turning and thought that maybe the best thing to do would be to get the key to the school and go in and take out all of my stuff. So later that same day, on Father's Day, I went in and took out all my things. Now I can leave anytime I want to. All I have left is one binder. Everything else is taken down. The walls are stripped and everything is sent back to the library. There is nothing of mine left there. Everything is at home. And it didn't hurt a bit, didn't hurt a bit. I had already given away all of my pictures and stuff that I had collected for twenty years, like my religious pictures. That did hit a few soft spots and I got a little teary-eyed and emotional. But going in last Sunday and taking everything out was wonderful because I don't need the abuse by people. I don't deserve it. If I sat on my butt and did nothing, then I could say yes,

> you have something to complain about. Just two weeks ago all of my students made rockets and together we set all the rockets off. Now is this a guy who does nothing for kids, someone who you would complain about because he doesn't give of himself? (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Frank's anger and hurt over the way he felt some students and parents treated him were part of the reason he chose not to attend the students' year-end party.

> At the year-end party, students present gifts to teachers but I don't want to be any part of that. I am not a hypocrite and I will not buy into hypocrisy. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Although Frank was devastated by the actions of some students, he also spoke of his admiration for others.

> I feel sad for the good kids who do have respect for others. They are treated badly by some of their classmates and I feel sad that they have to listen to me reprimand. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

He spoke of the respect he received from parents in the past and how difficult it was to deal with criticism from others.

> A parent came to me and patted me on the back to thank me for the work I had done with her son. She told me that it was because of the work I had done with him when he was in grade six that he was able to graduate with honors in electrical engineering. She told me that I had turned her son around. And then I have a parent that wants to run me down. So, I'm choosing to listen to the parent who spoke of all of the positive things I've done and I'm not going to take heart or listen to a complaint from a parent who wants to run me down. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

During our conversation on his last day of teaching, Frank spoke briefly about students who showed respect for others. However, his recognition of particular caring students ended with talk of others who he felt did not show respect or care.

> There are a lot of beautiful kids and there have been so many good kids in my classes. I feel sad for the good kids who do have respect for others but are treated badly by some of their classmates. I also feel sad that they have to listen to me talk about the negative things that others do. It's not fair. Three students gave me a little gift today and on Tuesday, before I left, another teacher gave me a gift from some students. The gift was a handmade card with a thirty-dollar gift certificate in it. Those are the students who show respect for others, they are the nice kids and I will miss them. But others, who were disrespectful, will not be missed. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Parental harassment influenced Frank's decision to retire from teaching. He felt attacked by their comments and, although he spoke of how he tried not to take the criticism personally, it had a significant impact. Hurt and frustration over the disrespectful behavior of certain students continued until the day he left. He described a scene where one of the three teachers at his grade level was given recognition by students and parents while he and the other teacher were not. He spoke of the humiliation he felt and of the relief he had in knowing that this kind of treatment would stop when he left.

> Out of the three teachers in our grade level, Joyce had all kind of parents and kids in her room. It really showed the difference between the three grade six classes. Joyce's class gave her a handmade quilt and when she opened it up, she just lost it and started to cry. Linda and I got next to nothing from our kids and that was really upsetting. You don't do things like that. You treat everybody the same or you do it privately somehow. When you give something like that to one out of three teachers, it says something about the other two. Are we chopped liver or what? It was a real slap. But now, I don't have to put up with it anymore. It is over and done and I am not sad at all about leaving, not at all. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Topic 2: Lack of Administrative Support

Frank's decision to retire earlier than planned was also based on criticism and the lack of support he felt from others in various levels of administration. Not only had the school board taken direct action to remove him from his administrative position, he felt criticized by his school administration and without support over matters at school.

A: At School

The topic of criticism and non-support from school administration appeared early in our conversations when Frank spoke of how and why teaching had changed. To begin with, he spoke in general terms about the lack of support for other teachers, not himself specifically.

> Teaching is not the same. I don't find that staff is as close. Part of the problem is the lack of support from administration. The administration will not back a teacher when it comes to a problem with a parent. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Continuing to speak of others, he described an incident that a friend of his had with an administrator.

> A year ago, a friend was having problems and was out on sick leave. A new administrator came into her school and had obviously heard something about my friend and didn't like her. And so the administrator went after her and told her that she had to quit and that she couldn't go on long-term disability. My friend was so down and didn't want to fight." I found this absolutely appalling and the only thing I could do was to help her understand that there was nothing wrong with her, that it was the "other side of the coin" and not her side. I also told her that there was nothing wrong in having someone to share this with and that she had to believe that she was okay, that it was not her fault. She contacted the ATA and within four days was given the forms to apply for long-term disability. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Frank told of his experiences of criticism and non-support when I asked if he had felt pressured by school administration to retire. Although he spoke of no direct pressure to leave, he felt that the constant criticism he received was a strong indication of how he was no longer valued.

> I haven't felt direct pressure to retire, but the principal has come to me a few times and has had informal talks with me about the "aura" of the parents in the community and what they think of Mr. Kelly. He told me that the parents say that I do nothing in my classroom but silent read and also that I sleep while the children work. I asked him: "Do you believe that?" and he said nothing. He doesn't do anything to support me and this lack of support puts more pressure on me to leave.
>
> I'm not happy every morning I go into the school. It's not a happy place. I have a principal that comes in and says things about me and does not give any positive compliments. What is he trying to do, push me out quicker? (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Although he did not feel direct pressure from the principal to retire, the criticism of his teaching and the non-support he felt over issues with parents had a significant impact on him and his decision to retire. This lack of support challenged Frank and pressured him to leave a profession he once loved. He recalled an incident of non-support.

> I remember an incident that happened just before Christmas when I was called into the principal's office to speak with a parent. After we had

> talked things through and the parent left, the principal said nothing. He never says anything in support of me. He never comes to tell me anything good about what I've done for kids or comment about all of the extra work I do for kids. I only hear complaints, never compliments. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

When we met in June, just a week before the last day of school, Frank felt overwhelmed by criticism and non-support when his principal told him that parents "didn't like the way he taught, were not happy with his work at all and were really upset because he wasn't doing enough for kids." The principal then added "how disappointed he was in him." Frank was devastated and commented on the principal's lack of support.

> The principal never once asked for my side of the story. In the two years since he has been at the school and has come to me to complain, he has never once said to me, "Okay, if there is a problem here, what can I do to help you?" Never, not once. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

He voiced anger over the principal's criticizing comments and non-supportive stance.

> The principal is such a wimp when it comes to parents. This was just one parent, that was all it was, one parent. I teach about 85 students and they each have two parents, so you are looking at about 170 people. But he comes in to complain about one comment. He then threatened me by saying that I should be aware that the parent would be at the play day the next day and that she would probably come up to me and give me a good talking to. I told him that I would talk with her at anytime. But she never once came near me. Even when I was within three feet of her, she never said a word. I wouldn't have known that there was anything wrong. It couldn't have been anything serious if she didn't approach me that day. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

He tried to make sense of the criticism.

> I thought about it and couldn't make sense of the comment that I wasn't doing enough for kids and then I remembered an incident that had happened a couple of days before. I took a boy's hat away because he wouldn't take it off in the classroom. So I took it away for half a day and I guess that is what made the parent mad. But the principal didn't tell me what the issue was about and he sure didn't offer any support. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

I saw pain in Frank's face and commented on how he would not have to deal with the criticism and lack of support at school for much longer. He spoke again of his

frustration over the loss of what could have been and of how "glad" he would be when it was over (Conversation, June 25, 2000).

Criticism of Frank's teaching seldom came directly from the source. Instead, the principal delivered the criticism and often agreed with what was being proposed by others. Frank described these incidents throughout our conversations and, on his last day at school, reflected on how disturbed he was by the lack of support he felt from his school administration.

> Never once did the principal come to me and ask my opinion. That really disturbs me that he never once offered support to me. When I listened to him speak at the assembly today as he read the Gospel and talked about how we have to care for each other and how we have to be empathetic to others and that when someone does something wrong, that we must forgive them, I thought, my God. This guy has no idea of how to do any of those things. He certainly hasn't done any of those things for me or my teaching buddy. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Along with the lack of support from the principal, Frank shared concerns about how the vice-principal treated him. His retirement card came with a miniature red sweater to symbolize his appearance at school and, in recognition of this symbol, the vice-principal knit the sweater to go over the card. Frank described the gift and acknowledged the gesture but also commented on how he felt he had not been supported by the vice-principal in the past. For a short moment, he felt appreciated but was unable to hold that thought for long because of the history of non-support.

> I wrote a note thanking the vice-principal for knitting the little sweater and when I saw her, I thanked her once again. But she is the one that stirred things up for me. The principal came to me and told me that the children were complaining about how I sit at my desk and talk on my cell phone.... The only person who saw me talking on the phone was the vice-principal and I know that that is where the trouble came from.
>
> She also caused me trouble when my retirement announcement came to the school. The announcement was sent by my family and it stated right at the top that it was a function put on by my family for me at a community centre. Then at a staff meeting, the principal announced that another school was putting on my retirement party. I got up and just about screamed at him. I told him that that was not true, that it was being done

> by my wife and family and that the list of school names on the sheet was for contact purposes. When I asked where he had gotten the idea that another school was putting on my retirement party, it was the vice-principal who spoke up and said: "Well, it says it right on the sheet." I then explained that what it did say, was that the party was being put on by the family and that the list showed the names of school that were invited. But the damage had already been done. The vice-principal had read the announcement earlier, misinterpreted it and then told the principal and other staff members about how another school was doing my retirement party. When people heard this, they got really angry. They were upset with me because they thought that they were not being allowed to put on my retirement party and that another school was doing it. They made comments like, "What are we, chopped liver or something? Why isn't our school doing it?" Some of them went to one of my teaching buddies and asked her why I couldn't accept a retirement party from them and did I think that they were not good enough? That's what happened before it was even announced at the staff meeting. It got turned all around, all stirred up when the vice-principal read the invitation and didn't bother to ask me for clarification. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

When I asked Frank if he ever felt support from his administration, he recalled two incidents where comments made by the principal may have been intended as positive recognition. However, Frank was unsure of the intent and unable to make sense of the comments in light of past experiences of non-support.

> When the principal attended my retirement party he said, "When I looked at your bulletin board at school, the one that has all of your class pictures for every year that you have taught, it told me something about the teacher." And although I wasn't quite sure what he was referring to, I thought at the time that maybe he had learned something about me. He also commented on my retirement card from the staff and, that he was impressed with the friends I had at my retirement party. That was the only comment he made. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

In response to the lack of support he felt from his principal, Frank chose to avoid any conversation with him. Frank remained silent and handled things in his own way.

> I took yesterday afternoon off. A good friend I taught with passed away Tuesday night and I went to his funeral. I thought about asking for help to cover my class but then I knew that I wouldn't get it. I'm not going to ask him [principal] for anything. That's what happens when you are not supported. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

B: Outside of School

Frank's decision to retire was influenced by the criticism and lack of support he felt from his school administration. However, in spite of the devastation this caused him, he spoke of understanding how an administrator's hands are often tied when it comes to dealing with teachers. School administrators must attend to directives that come from the school board and central office.

> In our system, the administration is a "puppet on a string." You have to do what central office tells you to do or you won't survive in administration. You have to do what they say and they say, "Comfort the parents first." Then after that, teachers come about third on the list. Your job as an administrator is to protect the system, to do what you have to do to protect the system. And if you have to sacrifice a teacher to do that, then you do it. That just absolutely appalls me. The lack of Christianity in our system makes me very angry and really upsets me. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Frank's first hand experience with higher levels of administration and their treatment of teachers made him aware of the force of their impact. In addition to the experience of being dismissed from an assistant principal role, he sat on committees that met with school officials and witnessed events that caused him to question the school board's intensions.

> I've been on the executive for our local union and have been on committees where the school board has been involved. You get to see the attitudes. You think that the board really cares about teachers but when you have worked with them, you get to see a whole different side. I remember one time during a meeting between the local executive and the school board, and we were asked how things were going in the schools. Most members of the executive spoke of how wonderful things were. After I listened to them talk, I got up and said that teachers had called me about the lack of respect they were getting from central office. They told me that they had many concerns and that they felt that when they tried to voice these concerns, that they were not being supported. A trustee spoke up and said, "Oh, Mr. Kelly, teachers are not calling us." I then said that the reason teachers were not calling is because if they do, they will be black-balled. When I spoke up on behalf of teacher concerns, the board didn't like it. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Topic 3: Silencing of Voice

Frank's decision to retire came as a result of a changed context and the lack of support he felt from administration. He tried to voice concern over the impact of these forces but was eventually silenced. In spite of the importance he placed on allowing teachers to speak for themselves, he was unable to maintain his own voice. As our conversations continued, there was a clear indication that his voice had diminished in strength.

In April, he commented on how he had used his voice in the past to challenge issues. His voice was silenced, however, when others refused to respond to his suggestions.

> I'm not one to sit back. I challenge what is being done to teachers even when others don't like to be challenged or questioned. For example, we have been working on bullying in our school and the parent council put out a survey for teacher input. When I am asked to respond, I will give an honest answer. So, in response to the survey, I told them that if they wanted to change and correct the bullying in the school they must stop parents who bully teachers. I told them that the problem in the school is not the students because the students just mimic their parents. But as a result of my honesty, nobody would talk with me about the issue, not the administration or anyone on the parent council. They asked, but they wouldn't listen. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

He described attempts to speak up for others who couldn't speak for themselves.

> I am the kind of person who is supportive of teachers and I was an administrator who was very supportive of my staff. I believe that to have a happy staff, principals have to be supportive and stand up for teachers. It is wrong when teachers are not allowed to speak up and to have a voice that is heard. But, they are not being heard. I tried to tell a trustee about the lack of support for teacher voice and was told that it wasn't true. Then when I responded by saying that teachers are afraid to speak up because of the consequences, the trustee didn't want to hear any more. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

In our next conversation, Frank continued to express frustration over being silenced.

> After I was put out of administration, I took the school board to court for coercion and for not treating me properly. I showed evidence of

harassment but the Board denied it. I found out that you can't fight lies in court, that it just makes you look bad. The judge was unable to decide who was telling the truth and threw the case out of court. (Conversation, May 25, 2000)

Frank spoke up for the things that he cared about. Even though he felt his attempts to be heard often fell on deaf ears, he continued. Unfortunately, by the time we met in June, his voice had been completely silenced.

> When the principal came in to tell me that the parents in the community were not at all happy with my work, I was so devastated by this claim that I couldn't talk. I just looked at him and then I looked out the window. I was standing at my desk and I just kept looking out the window. He yapped away and although I looked at him a couple of times, I continued to look out the window. I didn't argue with him. I just let him go on and I didn't say a word. Finally he finished by telling me how very disappointed he was in me. I just shrugged my shoulders and then he left. He was looking for a reaction but he didn't get one. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Frank remained silent at school until he left.

> I just walked out the door without saying a word. If someone wants me, they can find me and then I will talk with them. I'm not going to hang around for some parent to come in and take a strip off of me or to get a last shot at me.... So, I'm gone, I'm finished. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

As he walked away from the school on that last day, he felt the burden of what had been and the relief that came with leaving it behind.

> I closed my classroom door and my teaching buddy walked me outside. That was it. The last hurrah. She gave me a hug and I told her to remember the Serenity Prayer. I told her to pick her battles because it is the only way to survive. I also told her to stand up for herself and to never let go of that. Then I went over to my car, got in and drove away. It felt like freedom, just freedom. When I left to drive away, I just had an empty feeling, like there was nothing there, like going through a traumatic experience. You come to the end and you say, "It's over." There was just a release that went through my whole body and then a limp and airy feeling, an exhausted feeling that left me with an upset stomach. I know that it was just nerves because it is finally over. I think that sums up exactly how a person feels when it's over. It should have been an emotionally positive time for me. But it is not like that. Usually I wouldn't talk to people because I find it hard to say good-bye. But instead, I feel such relief to be out of it, out of the garbage because that is what it has been. I just need to get back to some clean living again. I guess in a way, it is too bad it had to end this way but, it's over. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Stress that came from changes in the context of teaching, lack of administrative support and the silencing of his voice was too much for Frank to endure. He could no longer stay. As he left quietly and somewhat unnoticed, he was relieved it was finally over. To honor this final step, he and several colleagues held a small celebration, a celebration of letting go that said good-bye to his teaching career and symbolized his hope for the future.

> Yesterday morning, before class, I was finishing my report card marks and a few people came into my room to talk. We then went outside and had a little ceremony. I had a red sweater that I wore in class everyday and was never without. The kids knew me as the teacher in the red sweater. It was a tradition. They would say, "There's Mr. Kelly and his red sweater." Anyways, I took it out into the schoolyard and burnt it, like a eulogy to Frank Kelly. And now there is nothing left of it, only a great big burn mark in the pavement. I shed a few tears and then we cheered. Seeing the sweater go was like watching twenty years of my life come to an end. There it was. I don't mean that the twenty years went up in smoke but that it is another block of time, another experience. And now it's time to go on to something else, to move on. Fire brings new life. It's the end to something and the re-birth of something else. The only way that some trees can re-furbish themselves is through forest fires because the heat breaks open the cones and the seeds are released. And that's the way I looked at the burning of my sweater. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Frank's experience of school, both in and out of the classroom, had a great impact on him. Although he could have continued to teach, he knew that he was not willing to endure the pressure any longer. His decision to retire, however, posed a new concern, concern over finance.

Topic 4: Finances

Throughout our conversations, Frank brought up the topic of finance. His concern about the financial aspect of retiring appeared stronger in some conversations than others but was always present. Concern came from the realization that his pension amount would be significantly less than his current take-home salary.

> It's scary. Twenty years of teaching and I will gross only $1100 a month. That means only about $900 take home. At this time, my wife and I are breaking even with both our salaries but we are not going on a lot of

> holidays or anything. It scares me as to what is going to happen. That's going to be an awful shock to have to make that change. Everyone says that it's not as bad as it seems, that you don't have to pay as much in taxes, that you don't have to make up as much as you think. But, it is still scary. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Although Frank planned his retirement for a year before the actual event, he spoke of how the decision to leave before the age of sixty or sixty-five was not one he had made when he first started to teach.

> The thing that bothers me the most is that when I came into teaching twenty years ago, I had just turned forty and I thought at that time that I should have been able to last until I was between sixty and sixty-five and be able to get twenty-five years of teaching in, no problem. In another five years I could have been close to doubling my pension. So there is a lot to sacrifice in leaving early. (Conversation, April 20, 2000)

Living with less income was a problem he knew he would face and he imagined he would have to look for something else to do, another type of work. When we talked a month later, Frank again spoke of the stress he experienced in thinking about living with less income and puzzled over "how to make ends meet" (May, 2000).

> The financial end of retiring has been the biggest worry. When you drop to about a third of your take-home pay, that's a lot. I've only taught twenty years. My pension will be $900 while I currently bring home about $2800 a month. So, that's a big difference. And now that I'm getting closer to the end I know that I will have to do something else. I'm thinking of doing something simple like driving truck. (Conversation, May 15, 2000)

In June, Frank did not start with talk of financial concerns as he had in our previous conversations. The topic came up when I asked if he had things in place to receive his pension. He spoke of being a "little disenchanted" over the amount he would receive and of the "difficulty in making pension choices that would have a life-long impact."

> You know, you are making decisions and you don't know if they are the right ones. You try to get people to help you and nobody will tell you what to do. I understand that ATRF will not choose a pension option for you and so they shouldn't. I know that if you were told to do something and it ended up being the wrong thing, that teachers could sue because they were given the wrong information. So instead, all that is provided is a

description of what the options are and it is up to me to decide. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Part of Frank's initial difficulty in making decisions about pension options came from the amount of detail he felt was provided. Only after he took the time to read the information thoroughly was he sure of what choice to make.

> It's all the fangley language they use and the legal language that is hard for us common folk to know what to do with it, to know what is the best option. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

He was somewhat encouraged when he received confirmation that he was eligible for a sum of money from his school board for retiring early.

> I get some money. If I retired at age fifty-five and had thirty or thirty-five years of teaching in, I would get 75% of my salary. But I am fifty-eight and will only get about a fifth of that, not even that. I'm not going to complain though. I've got a little bit and I'm happy with that. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Knowing the exact amount of his pension and his eligibility for additional money alleviated some of Frank's fear over retiring with less income but he continued to search out other options that would reduce his financial concerns.

> I'm going to look at the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) option. I won't be eligible to receive CPP until I turn sixty and it will be a reduced amount. But, it will give me another $300 a month and that will be a total of $1200 a month. So the amount is slowly moving up and it is sounding better. I was really scared at the beginning when we first started to talk because I didn't know how I was going to pay the bills at the end of the month. I'm always short every month and this is happening on the money I'm making now, while teaching. How are we going to do it with $1600 less each month. It's scary. There will have to be changes in the way we do things. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

He also looked into the possibility of collecting Old Age Security when he turns sixty-five, an option he was unaware of until he made inquiries.

> I don't think that a lot of people know that you can get Old Age Security at age sixty-five. But you have to apply. If you don't apply, you don't get it. A government guy told me to apply, otherwise I wouldn't even know about it. If you don't ask the right questions, you don't get the information. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

When the topic of finance came up on Frank's last day of school, he was not as concerned as he had previously been. Instead, he spoke of how he was looking forward to receiving his summer cheques and his first pension payments. In addition, he decided to obtain an advance from the Alberta Retired Teachers' Fund (ATRF). He viewed this choice as another way to relieve money concerns. He retired with the certainty of knowing the amount of his pension and with the hope that other sources of income would be available. He was not certain that he would be free from financial concerns but was hopeful that things would work out.

Frank Tells a Story of the Future, A Story of Retirement

With the belief that "things would work out" financially, Frank spoke of how he looked forward to being retired. He was hopeful about the future as he spoke of looking forward to finding something to do that would be less stressful, something that would allow him to regain a healthy focus on life. He began to story himself into the future.

> Everything is good. I will get my summer cheques and then I will get my first retirement cheques for July and August. So there will be an extra couple of cheques because I filed for my pension soon enough. And now I can get back to where it counts. I lost it for a while. I became too self-centered and into Frank's problems too much. I've let people get to me. I need to get the turmoil out of my system and then move on from there. It might take a year or it might happen sooner, but I'm going to do something different. Truck driving might be okay as a complete change of pace, something that would be relaxing. But for now, I need to have free time to spend reading books and relaxing at home. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Although he understood the importance of providing support to teachers who deal with being silenced, he was no longer willing to be their voice.

> Young teachers need help to feel good about themselves and not let others put them down. Older teachers need help when comments are made that suggest that they leave the profession because they don't teach and they are just along for the ride. That is so wrong, so far from the truth. They both need someone to stand up for them or at least they need help to survive. A support group for teachers would help but I'm not going to get involved. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Other than thoughts of starting a new job, his plans for retirement centered around events that had been part of his life in the past. He planned to continue to mark achievement exams during the summer, volunteer at a racecar track, take a leadership role in an organization he had been a member of for many years and spend time relaxing at home. He looked forward to continuing his volunteer work with adults at the remand centre and young people at the young offenders centre. He described this role as one that connected to teaching.

> I like to talk with them and help them to deal with their problems. Sometimes it is hard to go but it is rewarding when you are able to plant a seed to help someone else. I guess that's my teaching thing. That's what teachers are about, helping kids think things out. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Living Into Retirement

The Summer

Frank's retirement began when he drove away from school on the last day. As summer holidays progressed, he engaged in the same activities he had pursued in previous summers. When I talked with him approximately one month after he retired, he described his experience of marking achievement exams and the joy of seeing old friends he had made there in the past. He continued to volunteer at the racecar track and planned to enter his own car in a couple of races. He was maintaining weekly visits to the remand and young offenders' centers as well as spending time revamping by-laws in an organization he held a leadership role in. He did not mention retirement but talked instead of the many things he continued to do as part of his summer routine.

The Fall

I met with Frank just as the summer was ending and the school year was about to commence. He spoke of his relief in not having to go back to school. However, as our conversation continued, the relaxed tone of his voice disappeared. He was not returning to teaching but his wife was, so conversations of school continued. He voiced frustration

over how these conversations "triggered memories of teaching and experiences" (Conversation, August 25, 2000) he chose not to remember.

> I will never go back to teaching. I can't tell you how glad I am not to be going back. I made the cut and I don't need to go back into a place that made me feel like a fifth wheel. That's why I'm frustrated with listening to all of that stuff again. I don't want to hear about all of the troubles at school. I am out of teaching and I don't want any part of it. I've heard enough. (Conversation, August 25, 2000)

In spite of feeling angry and frustrated over having to listen to talk of school, he was relieved that he was no longer directly influenced by the stress he experienced in his pre-retirement. Concerns he had previously over the changed context of teaching, his treatment by administration and the silencing of his voice had almost disappeared. He spoke little of past concerns because they were no longer part of his story of retirement. They no longer had an impact on his life. One topic, however, continued to cause him concern. With the summer coming to an end, financial problems reappeared.

> In the last week or so, I have become very anxious about my bank balance. It just keeps going down as payments are made and with little coming in, it is really starting to scare me. It looked good in June when the summer cheques were banked but now that is gone and the bills keep coming in. It is really starting to scare me. We aren't planning any trips but would like to visit our daughter at Christmas. I thought I deserved a holiday after I retired but the bottom line is that you have to pay for it. So I was up in the middle of the night trying to find a deal on airfares. I know that we are going to have to simplify our lives in order to reduce expenses but I don't know where we are going to change because we still have to eat. (Conversation, August 25, 2000)

Part of the reason Frank experienced renewed concerns over his finances was due to a change in the amount of money he was to receive in the form of an advance from ATRF. He thought he would be able to access more money than he actually received. Once he knew the exact amount of the advance and realized he would have to pay it back in years to come, he decided that he could not afford to take it.

> I had one big challenge this week when I found out that the advance was much less than I had originally thought. I thought I would be getting about $370 a month but it ends up that the real number is $220 a month. That's a

> big difference. I knew that I only had one month from the time I received the first cheque to make any changes so, I called ATRF and told them that I needed to decline the advance. That was about 10 a.m. and because I wanted to make sure that the forms reached their office on time, I drove to Edmonton that same day to sign the release forms. (Conversation, August 25, 2000)

He spoke of his difficulty in making the decision to decline the advance and of how he "tossed and turned for several nights" before he made the call to cancel it. Although there was some relief in making the decision, he was once again faced with the dilemma of how to live with less income. He would have to look for work, work that had nothing to do with school or teaching.

> So, I've started looking in the newspaper for a truck-driving job. There may be a possibility of working part time driving a shuttle bus and I understand that the pay is about as much as what a substitute teacher gets. But, I definitely have no intentions of going back to that. I will never go back to teaching. (Conversation, August 25, 2000)

A month and a half later, Frank's story of retirement took an unexpected turn. When I met with him in October, he was anxious to talk of a recent change in his life, a change driven by financial concerns and one that came with connections to his story of teaching. Not only did the change cause a shift in his story of retirement, it allowed him to tell a new story of himself as a teacher.

> Before we begin, I have something to share with you. When I got my bank statement last week, I realized that without the advance I'm only clearing $850 a month and that my finances were really coming to a crash. The next day, I ran into a buddy from school who also retired last June and he brought a little reality into my life. He told me that there was a meeting for substitute teachers that afternoon and that perhaps I should look into it because of the advantages subbing offered, advantages I had never given any thought to. I thought about it and realized that my buddy had come in my path at the right time and for a good reason. I called to find out where and when the meeting was to take place, went to the meeting that afternoon and had my first job substituting the very next morning. (Conversation, October 14, 2000)

Frank's experience of being back at school as a substitute teacher brought a change in attitude and with it, a new perspective on topics raised in his pre-retirement story. Instead of dwelling on past experiences that he felt had "forced" his retirement, he

emphasizes how "thinking about teaching in a more positive way and going back with the right attitude" made teaching "fun again and brought back lots of good memories" (Conversation, October 14, 2000). His changed attitude about teaching came from knowing that as a substitute teacher he would not have to deal with the demands that a full time teaching position poses. He emphasizes the differences between the two positions.

> There is nowhere near the same time commitment and I don't have to do all of the other things like report cards and interviews. I can leave at 3:30 p.m. and not have to take work home. Although I do arrive early in the morning to find out what is planned, I don't have to do all of that planning. Report cards went out yesterday and I saw teachers going absolutely crazy trying to get them done when they have so many other things to take care of. They are sick from stress. When I was in a school the other day, a teacher told me that it makes her sick to see substitutes come in smiling when they are so worn out. I told her how nice it is to come in and do my job and then go home. So, I keep on smiling and I joke with teachers about being able to leave the school early without work to take home. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

Returning to the classroom as a substitute teacher offered Frank the opportunity to experience a different relationship with colleagues than the one he experienced before he retired. When he returned to a school he once taught in, he spoke of meeting teachers he knew and of how the experience not only "brought back lots of good memories" but also a show of respect for him as a teacher (Conversation, October 14, 2000).

> One of the really neat parts of this subbing is that I have only been in one school where I didn't know somebody. Every school I go to has at least one teacher I know and it's great to see colleagues and talk with them. People are good to me and treat me fairly. No one has tried to bully me into doing more than my assigned supervision. So, I don't mind helping others out when they are respectful of me. I offered to give my prep to a teacher who had been in a car accident the day before. She was very surprised and started to cry, saying that she couldn't believe I would do that for her. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

Parental harassment was not part of his substitute teaching experience. Student disrespect appeared at times in his new role but not to the extent that he dealt with before

he retired. Instead he spoke of how returning to school allowed him to "replace bad memories with good ones" (Conversation, October 14, 2000).

> When I walked into a grade nine class the other day, one of the girls started to laugh. She said, "Look at the geeky tie on that guy." So, I went over to her and said that I thought her comment was rude and that I wouldn't insult her about her appearance. Then I walked away and a little later she came to me and asked if I was going to "write her behavior up and send her to the office." I told her that I thought that we had come to an understanding and not to worry about it. So it turned out okay. Then when I was in another school, one class was bad but the other classes had really nice kids in them. I went back to a school I taught in several years ago where I had a lot of good times. I saw my old classroom and it brought back memories of the good times I had with kids there. I needed that to replace memories of all of the garbage I dealt with at my last school and that pushed me out. (Conversation, October 14, 2000)

> I was in a school with very high needs children and they were challenging. Some kids have a real chip on their shoulder and don't take to being told what to do. But it was okay. Then I taught French and had to admit to the kids that I knew nothing about French. So, we figured it out together. I don't feel guilty, what else am I supposed to do? And because I don't take it too seriously or personally, I'm enjoying it. I've dealt with adversity before and I feel that I can deal with whatever comes at me. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

Frank indicated that the change in his concern over student disrespect came as a result of his changed attitude. Even though some students continued to make "disrespectful remarks" to him, he felt he could "do something about the challenges" (Conversation, October 14, 2000).

> Most of the time things work out pretty good but at one school there is a boy who just keeps at me. He laughs at me when I walk down the hallway and he is getting louder and more aggressive. I thought that if I ignored him, he would go away but he hasn't. As I was leaving the other day, he called out "queer" and then laughed at the top of his lungs. Then another time, he yelled out that he "wished I was dead." But that is going to stop. The next time that I'm in that school and he behaves that way, I'll send him to the principal's office. Other than that, it has been good and I've enjoyed it.
>
> Sometimes when I'm on my way to a school, especially if it is a junior high, I get a little anxious. But I treat them with respect and if they choose not to treat me the same way, then I will ask them to leave the room and

go to the office. When I've done this, some of them get upset and want another chance but usually they have gone beyond the limits and need to leave. So that works for me. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Not only was Frank less concerned about student disrespect, he found that substitute teaching provided him with unexpected rewards. While subbing at a high school, he came in contact with students he taught several years before and spoke of "what a great experience it was."

> When I signed up to be a substitute teacher, I didn't put down high school. But I did go to a high school and although I did have a lot of anxiety about what I would be teaching, the experience was wonderful. There were kids in grade ten who had been in my grade five class. They came up and shook my hand and told me how glad they were to see me. I really needed that after leaving teaching feeling so disrespected by students. Being in a high school gave me that opportunity and I would go back even though I didn't sign up for it. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> Then when I went back after Christmas, I returned to the last school I taught in before I retired. I taught a grade four class and there were some students there who had older brothers I had trouble with before I retired. I thought that perhaps I would have some trouble with them because of what they had heard about me from their parents or siblings. But that wasn't the case at all. They were great and they told me how much fun I was. That's the way teaching used to be for me when I could laugh and joke with students. I was really surprised. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Before Frank retired, he felt a lack of administrative support at the school level and beyond. As a substitute teacher, positive experiences with administrators encouraged him to return to his last school, the school he once refused to visit.

> I met with one of my teaching buddies and she told me how much better it was at school. A couple of weeks ago, she received a harassing letter from a parent and was out in the hallway crying. The new principal came along and told her that she would not have to deal with that kind of treatment again. That's so different from how the past principal treated me. I decided that I would try it out and I've spent quite a lot of time there. (Conversation, October 14, 2000)

Other experiences he had with administrators in schools were also positive.

> There isn't a lot you can do to discipline students as a substitute teacher. So, whenever a student continues to ignore what he or she has been asked to do, I send them to the office. And you know, I have had principals come

> to me and thank me for taking that kind of action. They have even come into the classroom to ask if there is anything they can do for me. I really appreciate that kind of support. Discipline problems are dealt with and I really don't have be get involved. It is a totally different story than the one I dealt with last year. (Conversation, November 25, 2000)

Lack of administrative support both at the school level and outside of school did not concern Frank in his role as a substitute teacher. He attributed this change to the shortage of substitute teachers in the system. In response to the shortage, teachers are "offered many choices of jobs and can therefore pick and choose the jobs they want" (Conversation, November 25, 2000).

> I think that I'm going to be very busy substituting. When I went to an orientation meeting, there were only seven retired teachers ready to sign up. They are able to say when and where they will work and have a great deal of choice of jobs to pick from. (Conversation, October 14, 2000)

Frank left teaching in silence. The lack of administrative support, demands of teaching, lack of respect from parents and students and lack of collegial care and support he felt combined to silence his voice. He spoke of the anger he felt in being silenced and the treatment he received for trying to speak up and be heard. As a substitute teacher however, he told a different story, a story of being able to use his voice again to make decisions concerning his own destiny.

> When I was locked into teaching, I didn't have a say. But now I have a say in my destiny. I feel as though I've been put into the driver's seat and can write my own ticket for where and when to teach. I can turn jobs down anytime I want but I could also work everyday if I choose. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> I've told the administrators of the substitute service that I won't take anything but a full day. I won't take half time jobs so that when the list of available positions is phoned in to me, I can turn offers down until I get one that I want.
>
> Before I started subbing, my wife didn't want me to go back to teaching of any kind. She saw what it did to me. I didn't even want to go into her school to help her. But now, I can listen to her talk about things at school and I can talk about school and the experiences I have in a day. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> I've been really busy teaching in the last four weeks. But this week I felt that I had done enough so I'm taking it off. I'll have three weeks off and then I have a job when I come back after the holiday. It's great to be offered a choice and then be able to make that choice. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> I ran into a student this week who continues to cause me problems. After he made a loud, rude comment to me in front of his friends, I took him to the office. When we got there, I told the assistant principal that I would not come back to the school if the abuse continued. He assured me that he would take care of the problem and would get back to me about what was done to solve the problem. I also turned down a couple of half-day jobs this week to do volunteer work. I enjoy having some control in my life and the option to say no if I choose to. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

When Frank was given choice in matters that affected him and he felt that his voice was heard, he was willing to take greater risks at school. As a risk-taker, he accepted assignments to teach subjects that challenged his expertise.

> Although I taught grade six when I left teaching and said that I would only teach in upper elementary and some junior high subject areas, I am willing to teach junior high even if the students are really challenging. I've taught French, which I know nothing about and even music. (Conversation, November 25, 2000)

> I've been in the lower grades, in high school and a few weeks ago, I taught home economics. Some students questioned the way I was doing things and then I told them that I do all of the cooking at home. Just because I did things in a different way didn't mean that it is wrong. Then I invited them to show me how they thought it should be done. In the end, my tea biscuits were the only ones that were edible. The students were impressed and I gained a few brownie points. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Living Into the Future

Storying Himself Into the Future

Even though Frank predicted that "having enough money to live on will always be a concern and I will have to continue to find a way to make ends meet" (Conversation, January 19, 2001), substitute teaching provided him with successful teaching experiences and a reduction in financial concerns. As a result, he began to story himself into a hopeful future.

It's amazing how your life can change for the better. Even though I know that I have to be realistic about what I can achieve in a day, I go in and take it as it comes. I am now enjoying the rewards that teaching has to offer. (Conversation, October 14, 2000)

It is a different story than the one I was living before I retired. Call it a change in attitude or growth, but things certainly changed for the better. (Conversation, November 25, 2000)

Every once in a while I get a twinge about whether I made the right decision to retire, especially when I could have stayed teaching with a new principal. But the feeling only lasts a couple of seconds and then the deep down feelings take over and I realize that a lot of the pressures of teaching do not change. Even if I had had more support from administration, there are all of the other things. You are expected to give your heart and soul to teaching and it is not worth it. There is no escaping the high price you have to pay. So, I got out and when people ask me how retirement is going, I tell them that it is just great. When you start to go down hill mentally, your physical health is placed at risk. If I had stayed, that may have happened to me. I'm enjoying teaching and I'm coming home with a smile on my face. I lost that in the last years I taught and there was a lot of anger there. But now I can talk about school. I'm happy that things are working out the way they are and my smile is back. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Almost a Year Later

In a conversation almost one year after Frank retired from teaching, he described who he was and what that meant to him.

When people ask me who I am, I tell them that I'm a retired teacher and that I substitute. I feel like a retired teacher and it definitely feels good. Even though the substitute teaching is not nearly as exciting as it was to begin with and is now more like a job to go to, it is the kind of job that I can pick and choose how much I want to work. It's a good part-time job for me. I retired so I could have good days and now I have the freedom to do that.

So it is a different story than the one I was living a year ago and now life is good. I'm a lot more relaxed and I know that I can deal with problems and do things that are right for me. I have the courage to change the things that I know I can change and accept the things I know I cannot change. The acceptance is good because I know that I can't control what other people think. I need to feel good about me and I therefore have to pick and choose my battles. I found out that there are some things that you just have to let go. (Conversation, May 19, 2001)

Retelling Frank's Shifting Story to Live By

A Story to Live By…Forced to Change

Frank's story of teaching started as a childhood dream. From that time on he knew he wanted to teach, even though he didn't enter the profession until he was almost forty years old. As a beginning teacher, he felt honored to be a member of a respected profession and looked forward to many exciting years ahead. He recalled how rewarding teaching was when he received the respect of students, parents, colleagues and community. His days at school brought satisfaction from knowing he was helping others. "Teachers had such respect in the community because they were recognized for the good they did for others" (April, 2000).

Although he found teaching in the classroom to be a worthwhile and satisfying experience, he believed that his potential for helping others was best realized outside the classroom as an advocate for teachers. In pursuit of this interest, he became an administrator. Frank experienced great satisfaction in his new role but was "put out" (April, 2000) of administration several years later for acting on behalf of children. A teacher in his school was being abusive to students and when Frank took immediate action to stop the abuse, he was criticized for reporting the incident to social services before notifying the school board. He felt reprimanded for "going public with the information" and, in his opinion, was forced to resign from his administrative position or be "put out" of it. In response to this directive, he made repeated attempts to stand up for what he believed, but was unsuccessful. He felt his voice was not heard. The devastation he felt from this imposed directive caused a shift in Frank's story to live by, a change in his identity. Although he intended to put the past behind when he returned to the classroom and to take up from where he had left off in his story of teaching, he experienced a significant change, change he described as a "decline." The landscape challenged the image he held of himself as a teacher and had an impact on his teacher identity, his story to live by.

"Teaching is Not Fun Anymore, The Demands are Too Great"

Frank's experience on the landscape at school continued to change and deteriorate over a ten-year period. The year before he left teaching, he knew he was no longer willing to continue. Six months before he retired, he spoke of how "the demands are too great" (April, 2000). He struggled with increased demands at school and decreased support in the classroom. He was disturbed by a lack of respect for teachers and the teaching profession. He experienced events that targeted his teaching approach and caused him to feel that his uniqueness as a teacher was not valued. His story of teaching was criticized by some who showed little respect for his approach and attempted to dictate how he should teach. In reaction to the criticism, he tried to put negative comments aside and to think instead of times when he was acknowledged by students and parents. "Teaching has always been the simple rewards, a small thank you for the little things you do for kids" (May, 2000). However, he could not always overlook the intent of others who tried to tell him how to teach. "As soon as others dictate how teachers should teach, uniqueness disappears and the individual personalities of teachers are lost" (April, 2000). "When they are disrespectful and complain about the way we teach and intend to make teachers teach in a way that is not their own, they take the heart out of teachers. They destroy teaching as we know it" (June, 2000). Parental harassment, student disrespect and the devastation caused by challenges to his teaching had a great impact on his story to live by and the image he once held of himself as a teacher.

Lack of collegial care and support also influenced Frank's story to live by. He mourned the loss of "fun times" (April, 2000) when the relationship he and colleagues shared was "as close as family" (April, 2000). Several incidents took place just before he retired that indicated to him how things had changed. When his family held a retirement celebration and invited his entire staff, only a few colleagues attended. Even though he excused the others by saying "how busy people are" (June, 2000), he was disappointed by

the small show of support. He felt marginalized by the difference in the recognition his administrator received and the recognition he was afforded.

> When a big fuss is made over a principal who is just leaving a building and you have people retiring, there is a big difference. All of this for him and the people who are retiring didn't even get a thank you. (June, 2000)

In response to what he felt was little recognition to his leaving, he refused to take part in any school-related events that were intended to recognize his retiring.

Lack of administrative support both inside and outside of school also challenged Frank's story to live by. He compared how the support he received from administration in the first half of his career was beneficial and very different from the lack of respect, trust and friendship he experienced in the last half. He recalled many incidents of non-support that intensified as he approached retirement.

In his last month of teaching, when he was reprimanded by the principal over a parent complaint that he was "not doing enough for kids" (June, 2000), he felt no attempt was made to ask for his input or to support him. In order to cope with the non-support, he went to the school on Father's Day and took everything out of his classroom. "Taking everything out was wonderful because I don't need the abuse, I don't deserve it" (June, 2000). After years of non-support and criticism from administration, he felt devalued. Constant challenge to his teacher knowledge changed his story to live by.

Frank believed that changes to the landscape at school and demands of teaching forced him to make the decision to retire. His story to live by, a story composed over time, shifted in response to challenges to his professional confidence and identity. He spoke of how "the first ten years of teaching were great but the last ten have been downhill all the way" (April, 2000). Conditions on the school landscape reached a point where he was no longer willing to tolerate them. The only solution he felt he had was to leave. His story to live by had been challenged long enough and he would not consider staying. Although he voiced resentment over having to leave the profession earlier than

he had originally planned, he was ready to leave. He looked forward to retirement and the relief that would come from leaving a demanding teaching career behind. His hope for the future was revealed when he said, "I can't imagine that I will be any happier than when I retire and say good-bye to the disrespect" (June, 2000).

"It's the End to Something and the Re-Birth of Something Else"

One way he said "good-bye" to his teaching career was to take everything out of his classroom a month before he left. Another way was to destroy a personal symbol of his teaching identity. Every day Frank taught, he wore a bright florescent red sweater. Teachers and students knew him as "the teacher in the red sweater." On the last day of school, he asked several colleagues to join him in the courtyard outside the school where he set fire to his favorite sweater. This public display was intended to bring an end to his story of teaching. As the sweater burned, he shed a few tears and recalled "seeing the sweater go was like watching twenty years of my life come to an end." (June, 2000). Sad feelings were quickly replaced by feelings of hope as he looked to the future. "Now it's time to go on to something else, to move on. Fire brings new life. It's the end to something and the re-birth of something else" (June, 2000). Frank was relieved to let go of a teaching career that presented continuous challenge to his identity.

"I Just Walked Out the Door Without Saying a Word"

Frank walked away from the school on the last day without saying a word. He felt his voice had been silenced from experiences that challenged his story to live by. Although he felt the burden of that silencing, he spoke of the freedom he felt as he drove away. Mixed emotions left him with an "empty feeling, like there was nothing there, like going through a traumatic experience" (June, 2000). At that point, he knew it was the end and said to himself,

> It's over. There was a release that went through my whole body and then a limp and airy feeling, an exhausted feeling that left me with an upset stomach. I know that it was just nerves because it is finally over. (June, 2000)

Storying Into the Future

Before he retired, Frank contemplated life after teaching as he storied himself into the future. He planned to continue his involvement in activities that had been part of his life for some time. During the summer, he would mark achievement exams, volunteer at the racetrack, continue to provide assistance to adults and young people as a volunteer at the remand and young offenders centers and work on the executive of an organization he was a life time member of. He had no other set plan to follow when summer was over, but was certain that his future would be bright without a teaching career that presented constant challenge to his identity. He would "never go back to teaching" (August, 2000). He would, however, continue to deal with financial pressure. "The financial end of retiring is the biggest worry" (May, 2000). Concern over not having enough money to live on was a constant in his story to live by before he retired and would continue to be as he storied himself into the future.

A Summer Lull

As the school year ended and summer began, Frank spoke of how "everything is good" as he continued to live the story of "how glad I am not to be going back" (June, 2000). Not only did he experience temporary relief from financial concerns when he received both summer pay and pension cheques but he found satisfaction in knowing that his summer would resemble summers of the past and that he would not be returning to the classroom. His summer plans changed slightly when he accepted the position of chairman for a volunteer organization but the increase in responsibilities and time commitment did not increase the total amount of time he would spend volunteering. In order to maintain the level of commitment he was used to, he reduced his involvement to one organization instead of three or four. He was not willing to commit any more time than he had previously given so that he could continue to have free time to spend "reading books and relaxing at home." His story to live by, that told of his willingness to volunteer help to others, would continue on much as it had before he retired.

Frank's Story to Live By Experiences a Dramatic Shift

Part One: "I am Out of Teaching and I Don't Want Any Part of it"

With the approach of fall and his commitment to familiar summer routines complete, Frank experienced a significant change in his story to live by. Recognition of the change was initiated in conversations with his wife. She was returning to a teaching position and her talk of school "triggered memories of teaching" (August, 2000), memories that Frank tried to forget. "I'm frustrated with listening to all of that stuff again. I don't want to hear about all of the troubles at school. I'm out of teaching because of the turmoil and I don't want any part of it. I've heard enough" (August, 2000).

As the summer ended, he also faced renewed financial concerns. He discovered that a plan he initiated to increase his pension amount was not going to provide enough relief to his money problems. He cancelled the plan and then became very concerned about how to solve the dilemma of not having enough money to live on. He and his wife had planned to visit their daughter at Christmas, but the trip would have a financial impact on their already depleted funds. "I thought I deserved a holiday after I retired but the bottom line is that you have to pay for it" (August, 2000). He worried about how to live with less income before he retired, but told a story of being increasingly stressed over the issue of money after he retired. "In the last week or so, I have become very anxious about my bank balance. It just keeps going down as payments are made and with little coming in, it is really starting to scare me" (August, 2000).

In spite of his concern over how to make ends meet, he was determined not to return to teaching. Maintaining a connection to the classroom was not part of Frank's plan for retirement, he would "never teach again" (August, 2000). Not only was he reluctant to engage in any talk of school but he was convinced that, although he enjoyed volunteering, he would never consider volunteering in any school setting. That part of his life was over and teaching would not be part of his story to live by in the future.

As he continued to live the story of not having enough money and feeling pressured to do something about it, he listened when a friend told him about an opportunity to take a position as a substitute teacher and earn money at school. Without an alternative plan to deal with the money dilemma, the suggestion appealed to him. His certainty over never returning to the classroom disappeared. Several hours later, he attended an organizational meeting for substitute teachers and started substitute teaching the next morning. As he re-entered the classroom in his new role, he began to tell a story of teaching that was different than the one he told before he retired.

Part Two: "It's a Different Story Than the One I was Living Before I Retired"

Frank began to live a different story than the one he lived before he retired. The new story resembled the one he lived in the first ten years of his teaching career and before he experienced events that caused him to regard teaching as "downhill all the way" (April, 2000). His story to live by changed, not only because he was positioned differently on the landscape but also because the landscape told a different story of him. As a substitute teacher, he continued to experience events that were part of life on a school landscape but with a changed perspective.

> It's amazing how your life can change for the better. Even though I know that I have to be realistic about what I can achieve in a day, I go in and take it as it comes. I am now enjoying the rewards teaching has to offer. (October, 2000)

Frank's changed position on the school landscape and the story the landscape told of him caused a shift in his story to live by.

"There is Nowhere Near the Same Time Commitment"

As a substitute teacher, he entered classrooms with a changed attitude and his story of teaching began to turn into one of reduced stress and increased pleasure. Part of the reason for his change in attitude came from knowing that as a substitute teacher, he would not have to deal with demands posed by full-time teaching. He spoke of the difference. "There is no where near the same time commitment. I don't have all of the

planning or other things like report cards and interviews. I can leave at 3:30 p.m. and not have to take work home" (November, 2000). He was able to leave problems of school behind for others to deal with. His new story told of living with less stress.

"Teaching is Fun Again"

In addition to reduced demands, his intent to think about teaching in a more positive way made a difference in how he viewed himself on the school landscape. Even though he continued to be challenged by some students who made inappropriate comments, the incidence of disrespectful behavior was minimal in comparison to the story he lived before he left teaching. Instead, he experienced unexpected rewards that made "teaching fun again" (October, 2000). For example, when he accepted an assignment at a high school and met students he had taught several years before, he felt uncertain over how they would react to him. He was pleasantly surprised however when "they came up and shook my hand and told me how glad they were to see me. I really needed that after leaving teaching and feeling so disrespected by students" (December, 2000). He recalled another time when he returned to the last school he taught in before he retired. He was assigned to teach grade four and as he checked the class list, he recognized names of students who had older siblings he had taught previously and with whom he had problems. He expected to encounter some difficulty because of what the students may have been told about him from their parents or siblings. Instead, he was surprised by their respectful treatment of him. "They were great and told me how much fun I was. That's the way teaching used to be for me when I could laugh and joke with students. I was really surprised" (January, 2001). His changed story told of unexpected rewards.

"It's Great to See Colleagues and to Talk With Them"

Returning to the classroom as a substitute teacher offered him a different relationship with colleagues than the one he experienced before he retired and a connection back to his original story to live by on the school landscape. At first, he was

apprehensive about how he would be received. However, he was relieved when teachers and administrators welcomed him to their schools. He commented on how "people are good to me and treat me fairly" (November, 2000). As a result of this change in relationship, he was willing to extend himself to help others.

> I don't mind helping others out when they are respectful of me. I offered to give my prep to a teacher who had been in a car accident the day before. She was very surprised and started to cry, saying that she couldn't believe I would do that for her. (November, 2000)

In addition to feeling appreciated by other teachers, he experienced administrative support over decisions he made involving students. When students caused problems or challenged his teaching, he could choose to handle the situation himself or request assistance from the administration. Whenever he made a request for assistance, administrators were supportive. Change in relationship with colleagues and supportive administrators changed his story to live by.

"I Have a Say in My Destiny"

A shortage of substitute teachers in the school system placed Frank in a position where he was able to choose when and where to teach. When he received a call from the substitute desk, a wide range of choice was offered to him. He was able to choose the area of the city, the school, the grade level and, subject area to teach. He was also free to adjust the number of teaching assignments he would accept as his money needs varied. Additional choice was available when he arrived at school. He could choose to follow the plan provided or make slight adjustments as he saw fit. As a result of being provided with greater choice and the opportunity to make decisions regarding teaching assignments, he began to tell a different story than the one he told before he retired. He felt he was able to use his voice to make decisions concerning his destiny. He described the difference. "When I was locked into teaching, I didn't have a say. But now, I have a say in my destiny" (December, 2000). Freedom of choice and the opportunity to be heard is empowering. "I feel as though I've been put in the driver's seat and can write my own

ticket for where and when to teach" (December, 2000). "I enjoy having some control in my life and the option to say no if I choose to" (January, 2001).

"I am Willing to Teach, Even if Students are Really Challenging"

Once he felt that he had a choice in matters that directly affected him and that his voice was heard and honored, he was willing to take risks at school. He accepted teaching assignments that were different than the grade levels he taught in the past and therefore challenged his expertise.

> Even though I said that I would only teach in upper elementary and some junior high subject areas, I am now willing to teach junior high even if the students are really challenging. I've taught French, which I know nothing about and even music. I've been in the lower grades, in high school and a few weeks ago I taught home economics. (November, 2000)

Frank's story to live by continued to change as a result of his willingness to take risks.

"I Can Talk About School"

When Frank left teaching, he avoided thoughts of past teaching experiences and any talk of school. He was able to avoid conversations about school until his wife went back to teaching in the fall. As he listened to her voice concern over the upcoming year, he felt anger and frustration over having to listen to this talk. However, once his teaching experiences became more positive, he was willing to not only listen to talk of school but to engage in conversations with others about new teaching experiences.

"My Smile is Back"

Before Frank left teaching, he spoke often of how he looked forward to retirement. His plans did not, however, include images of freedom from financial concerns, world travel or physical well being. Instead, retirement would mean an end to job-related stress. That is the story Frank continued to tell until he re-entered the profession as a substitute teacher. New, positive experiences at school restored his story of teaching. Satisfying experiences in teaching caused him to tell the story of "retirement

is great." Retirement is great for Frank because his story to live by, his identity as a successful teacher, was restored. He was happy to report also, that his smile returned.

> When people ask me how retirement is going, I tell them that it is just great. I enjoy teaching and I'm coming home with a smile on my face. I lost that in the last years I taught and there was a lot of anger there. But now, I can talk about school. I'm happy that things are working out the way they are and my smile is back. (December, 2000)

"Having Enough Money to Live on Will Always be a Concern"

Throughout the time I met with Frank to hear his story of teaching and retiring, he spoke often of the concern he had over having to live on less income in retirement. At times he was encouraged to think that "things would work out" but hopeful thoughts disappeared when he was once again overcome with worries about having enough money to live on. "Money is always going to be a problem and I will have to continue to find a way to make ends meet" (January, 2001). Frank's story tells of financial concerns that originated in the past and will continue to be a part of his future.

"Every Once in a While I Get a Twinge About Whether I Made the Right Decision"

Towards the end of our conversations, Frank shared thoughts about his decision to retire. He questioned his decision in light of the fact that retirement meant that he would have to live with money concerns in the future. He also contemplated what teaching would have been like with a change in administration at his school. "Every once in a while I get a twinge about whether I made the right decision to retire, especially when I could have stayed teaching with a new principal" (December, 2000). He explained.

> The feeling only lasts a couple of seconds and then the deep down feelings take over and I realize that a lot of the pressures of teaching do not change. Even if I had had more support from administration, there are all of the other things. You are expected to give your heart and soul to teaching and it is not worth it. There is no escaping the high price you have to pay. So, I got out and when people ask me how retirement is going, I tell them that it is just great. (December, 2000)

"I'm a Retired Teacher and I Substitute Teach"

During a conversation, almost a year after Frank retired from teaching, he shared thoughts about his changed story to live by.

> When people ask me who I am, I tell them that I'm a retired teacher and I substitute teach. I feel like a retired teacher and it definitely feels good. Even though the substitute teaching is not nearly as exciting as it was to begin with and is now more like a job to go to, it is the kind of job that I can pick and choose how much I want to work. It is a good part-time job for me. I retired so that I could have good days and now I have the freedom to do that. (May, 2001)

> So it is a different story than the one I was living a year ago and now life is good. I'm a lot more relaxed and I know that I can deal with problems and do things that are right for me. I have the courage to change the things that I know I can change, accept the things I know I cannot change. The acceptance is good because I know that I can't control what other people think. I need to feel good about me and I therefore have to pick and choose my battles. I found out that there are some things that you just have to let go. (May, 2001)

CHAPTER V: LORRAINE'S STORY OF RETIRING FROM TEACHING

Chronicling Lorraine's Experience of Retiring

Lorraine's Story of Her Teaching Life

Beginning With a Love of Art

From the moment Lorraine and I began our conversations, it was clear that her personal and professional life centered in teaching and creative expression through art. Her home displayed a variety of colorful and interesting acrylic paintings, colored pencil drawings, print designs, tile-mosaics, a collection of masks and other artistic expressions. Her dining room table and surrounding spaces held a number of works in progress she planned to use in her teaching. When I asked questions about her involvement in art, she spoke of how art appreciation and creative expression had always been part of her life. As a child, she enjoyed using colored pencils to draw faces and horses from calendars her father would bring home for her. At the age of ten, she was recommended by teachers at school to attend student art classes at an art school. She did not find these classes much to her liking and instead found ways to pursue her own interest in painting and drawing things she enjoyed. She would have gone to art school after graduating from high school but because her parents "definitely didn't want an artist on their hands" (Conversation, April 22, 2000) she attended university. She completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and then started a Bachelor of Education degree. The education courses, however, were "so boring" she decided not to continue. Instead she became a librarian and was able to pursue her interest in art by working in the art department of a large city library. A year later she married and moved to another province. In the new location she did some freelance art work, drawing portraits and murals but once again felt that "it wasn't much fun" having to do what was set out for her. She then took a position in commercial art design and, although she enjoyed the challenges her job presented, she questioned the impact she was having on the lives of others. She described an incident that changed her career path.

> I heard about the death of a seventeen year old boy who didn't think that his life was worth living. I was really disturbed by the incident and it caused me to think about why he did it and what had troubled him. I wondered about what could have helped him. It was then that I began to think about what I was doing in my own life and to realize that in the kind of work I was doing, I was not helping others. Certainly my job was enjoyable but I didn't feel that I was making a difference in peoples' lives. I thought about teaching and of how it was a job worth doing. Teaching has a point to it, and that appealed to me. It still does. A short time later, I quit my job and went back to university to become a teacher. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

After completing her education degree, she began to teach with the hope that her interest in art would find expression in her teaching. She spoke of how she used traditional methods during her first year that "imposed stuff from a book onto her students" (April 22, 2000) but then changed her teaching approach to allow students to express themselves through various art forms. She gave credit to a developmental drama course for initiating the change that caused her to begin designing learning opportunities that encouraged students to engage in personal expression and deepened their understanding of concepts through the arts.

> After I took the drama course, it changed the way I taught everything. It made me realize that the teaching I had done in my first year was imposing. Instead, I began to set things up so that the students experience something from within and could give expression to what that experience was like. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Artistic expression was encouraged in all subjects Lorraine taught from then on. Art was the way she helped students to facilitate connections between different subjects.

> I think that eventually the teaching of those subjects was what led me to think that at some level, many of the things that you do in one subject have a connection to what you do in another. When you look at the more artistic uses of language, like when you are writing poetry or structuring stories, there are things that you go through that are really similar to what you would go through when you're drawing or trying to work out a scene or put it down on paper. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Love of Learning

Lorraine found purpose in teaching. She was excited about helping students make connections and discover new learning. Learning was a personal goal she set for herself

as she continued to learn from others. "I'm a learner and I have always been a learner" (Conversation, April 22, 2000). Twelve years after she started teaching, she entered a Masters of Education program to research the connection between art and language arts. This was a "high point" in her career. Though she says she was not able to "use all of the knowledge she gained through her study," she spoke positively about teaching experiences that continued to enhance student learning and foster her own personal learning.

> I kept thinking that I would get to use some of it but people weren't ready for that way of thinking twenty years ago. That's not to say that I didn't have some great experiences in between other kinds of things that probably made my experience in my last school different than it would have otherwise been. When I returned to school after my sabbatical, I worked in gifted education and that was a whole other learning stretch. It was almost like learning a different discipline because it had its own terminology, its own models and its own approaches. It was great because there was an emphasis on thinking skills, problem solving and creativity. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

She acknowledged the positive attributes of the gifted education program and her learning and teaching time in it but "felt that my teaching was something I was doing to the kids. I taught thinking skills and provided activities to go along with it but had a nagging thought that that is not what thinking is for. Even though the learning for me was great, it was not enough for kids" (Conversation, April 22, 2000).

Love of Art and Learning Combine in Teaching

Lorraine's interest in art and learning did not exist as separate entities. She spoke of how she did not see them as "different." "Art is the way I learn and the way I think about things" (Conversation, April 22, 2000). Art was the way she also thought of teaching.

> Art has natural patterns and the process of making art is the making of natural patterns that are open to new ideas. You might start out with something in mind but then you need to be open to new ideas. I view learning and teaching the same way. You start out with a plan but then you change to take into consideration new thoughts and things that are happening in the classroom. You can't force kids to learn if they are not

> ready. You have to be open to new opportunities or advice or learning when something great comes along. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Several years after she left the gifted education program, an opportunity to combine her love of art and learning in teaching presented itself when she became involved in partner teaching with a colleague who held similar beliefs.

> When the money ran out for the gifted education program, I went back to my previous school. A colleague approached me and said that she really wanted to work with me. So, we were given permission to do a humanities program by combining social studies and language arts. We worked with many kids that had not been successful learners and, by using a lot of art, they did some great things. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Opportunities to teach through inquiry and, to facilitate learning activities that allowed students to make connections in the way Lorraine dreamed of continued when she started teaching at her last school. She was encouraged to use an approach she believed was best for student learning in her teaching and spoke of how her final teaching assignment permitted her to put her beliefs into practice.

> It took until the last three years to really be able to work with all of the ideas I gained from my sabbatical year and from working in gifted education. That was when I was really able to allow kids to learn instead of imposing learning on them. That was when I had the chance to build the program with the big picture in mind. Some mind-boggling things have happened and it has been a remarkable experience for me. I've been given support for doing arts where it isn't considered a frill, where it is considered a valuable way of understanding yourself in the world. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Lorraine's Pre-retirement Story

Enthusiasm For Teaching Through the Arts

Lorraine's acknowledgement of her passion for teaching and learning through the arts was where our pre-retirement conversations began. She had taught for almost thirty-three years and, although she spoke briefly about her teaching experiences in the first thirty years of her career, she spoke often about what teaching was like for her in her last three years. Her passion for teaching was re-kindled during those final years when she

became involved in designing curriculum at the school level. She described the excitement that implementing such a curriculum offered to both her and her students.

> The program is new and so for three years I have been planning new curriculum and trying to figure out how to teach in a way that develops understanding of concepts through art. Although there is no clear path to follow with this kind of curriculum and it is very challenging, it is also very exciting. As a teacher, you are always trying to negotiate the curriculum with the kids. You are always scrambling because you plan the big picture, where you want to go and what things you will choose to work with. And when you do this through inquiry and through artistic interpretations, you are never exactly sure where the students' questions and the connections with the curriculum are going to take you. Sometimes you have to come home and think about how the kids' interpretations need to be clarified. You are constantly trying to think. In the three years that I've worked with kids in this way, I've found it a really powerful way for them to learn and it is so exciting. And it's great for creating a sense of community in the school. I really feel that this approach to learning gives all kids a sense of community and that they can work together. The key thing is making room for the kids to have a say. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Lorraine believed that teaching through the arts was a "creative act."

> Teaching is such a creative act. You set things in motion, but you are not exactly sure what you are going to end up with. Just like when you start off on a painting. You have an idea of where you want to go but you don't really know what it's going to look like. There is certainly excitement in it and that's the way I feel about these classes I teach. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

She acknowledged the benefits and identified the commitment involved when students are invited to ask their own questions and make inquiries into their own wonders. Lorraine felt this approach allowed students to explore connections between concepts within and between subjects and to come to deeper levels of understanding.

> This approach recognizes that teachers are the central part of the process but that they don't have to be afraid of not having the answers. When teachers and students come together in the process, they become a community of inquirers. And this way of teaching allows me to look beyond the skills that, to me, are not the crucial things.... It doesn't mean that I can force them to do things. Instead, I give them choice. If I don't think that they are making the right choices, I tell them what the

> consequences are. But, I have to respect their choices. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

Enthusiasm For Student Learning

Student enthusiasm for learning contributed to Lorraine's enthusiasm for teaching.

> I love the kids and the kind of things that I've been allowed to do at this school. There is no doubt in my mind that it is a really powerful program for a great many kids. It's not the answer for everyone, but it really works for many kids. I've seen what kids can do and I've watched kids with different abilities work together. I've had these kids for three years and I know what they did the year before and I can build on that.... Over three years you can really see what they can do and how they can connect things, not only within a lesson or within a unit, but from one year to the next.... That makes it very exciting. It's the kind of thing that I want to take away with me when I leave. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

Throughout our conversations, it was clear that she loved to teach and that she was enthusiastic about her involvement with students. Her contribution to teaching and student learning was acknowledged by a colleague during a year-end celebration.

> Well, it has been three years since I met Lorraine. I had heard so much about her and I knew that she was someone who could work with us and show us the way. That is what Lorraine has done for three years, helped to show us the way. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Lorraine's passion for teaching came from rewarding experiences with her students. Unfortunately, the context of teaching changed over the years and challenged her willingness to continue to teach. It was not that she viewed the change as a loss of what had been. The change came with intensified demands. In addition to demands at school, she faced stressful demands in her personal life. As I listened to her story of retiring, it was clear that demands both in and out of school played a part in her experience of retiring from teaching.

A Changed Context—Demands at School

In her final year, she knew the demands of teaching were consuming too much of her life and she had to leave. The rewards of her career came at a price she was no longer willing to pay. She said: "The only part that I kind of resent is that I finally got to teach in

a way that I believe is best for students. But, the circumstances are such that I don't have the time to do a decent job of it" (Conversation, April 22, 2000).

Lorraine's decision to retire was confirmed as she revealed the impact constant demands of school were having on her life.

> I'm not quitting because I have great plans for retirement. Instead, I look forward to it as an escape. I would have taught for another five or six years if there had been decent working conditions. But not having any time is too hard. The time commitment to teaching is so unmanageable in terms of all the increasing expectations. This last year or two has been really, really hard. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

Along with feeling some resentment over leaving teaching earlier than she planned, she realized that demands of teaching were affecting her well being. She spoke of her concern over the long-term effects.

> I think that the moment of truth came last year when I was having gall bladder trouble. I didn't know what it was to begin with but my doctor basically told me that it was because I had been "eating on the run" for thirty years, I was now paying for it. When I thought about what she had said, I knew that it was true. Half the time, you've got a sandwich in one hand and you're dealing with kids on the other. You skip breakfast, rush through lunch and then hurry home to make dinner and then go back to the school. After I had my gall bladder out, I was supposed to have relaxing meal times and I said: "Let's get real here. I've only got five minutes to eat lunch. That's when I knew that it was time to do something for me. My body just said: "Whoa" and I knew that I didn't want to do this anymore. When you don't sleep properly and you don't eat properly and the stress level is so much higher, it is really hard. I wake up in the middle of the night and I think about what I forgot to do at school. You just try to survive but it is too hard to keep on top of everything. That's when I knew that I didn't want to do this anymore. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Retirement would not have been a consideration at this time had the demands of teaching not intensified. She voiced frustration and acknowledged how challenging they had become each time we met. Lorraine resented demands that interfered with her desire to engage in meaningful teaching and learning.

> Retirement hasn't been a matter of being bribed by an incentive plan or the thought of a nest egg or travel. Instead, I think more and more that it has been the context of teaching and some of the expectations I have

> experienced as a teacher. How I want to teach and how I want to feel about teaching has been eroded away to the point where I have to make a moral decision, the decision to retire. In order to have a life at all, I have to continue to cut corners. And either you do that with kids and you shortchange them on the marking or the kinds of activities you give them to do or, you just decide to do something different. I don't have to spend my life supervising lunchrooms and photocopying and other stuff that takes more and more time. Everything has been cut back so far and for me, that's the issue. I'm at the point where I teach five different programs. For two of them, I have to find ways to teach them through the arts. So, that means knowing something about many different disciplines. All I have is four preps to do that in. I don't even have a prep for each course I teach. That might be okay if you knew that when school was out that you could spend time after school to get stuff ready for the next day. But that's not the way it is. Meetings and phone calls keep me going until I go home for supper. Then I often go back in the evenings. I'm up at 5:00 a.m. and on the go again. I just can't do it and continue to do a good job. I go into the school on Sunday to work. If I didn't, I just couldn't survive. I have no prep on Friday and if I have lunchroom duty as well, I'm lucky if I have time to get in a trip to the washroom somewhere along the way. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

This description of a week shows how overwhelmed Lorraine was by the demands of teaching. Although she tried to simplify the demands of her personal life, it was not enough to reduce the stress.

> I hadn't thought of retiring until this year. But it really became clear to me that even though I simplified my life by organizing my home so that I could do more schoolwork there instead of at the school, it was just not going to do it. Being organized at home was not going to be enough. I always resolved that if I ever got to the stage where I was spending more time whining about teaching than I was being creative, it was time to do something else. I am at that point now. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

When she spoke of how the demands enforced change in her teaching, she did not separate one demand from another. Instead, she spoke as if all demands were interrelated.

> It takes a lot of time to plan lessons and let's face it, you can't do it in only four preps. It is hard to be positive about all of the things that must be done. When you have thirty kids in a classroom and are responsible for doing all of the individual program plans (IPPs) as well as implementing modified program for students with difficulties, it is really hard work. Then, for each kid on an IPP, there are parent meetings three times a year and if a parent can't come during the week, I've held meetings on Sunday at the school. That doesn't even take into consideration all of the time

> spent on the phone. And the marking of student work is unbelievable. I feel that it is important to provide students with feedback on their assignments but when there are 30 students to respond to, it's like having two classes in one. And I'm supposed to pull all of this together. It's difficult and at times very exhausting. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Her description of the changed teaching context continually indicated how one demand related to others. Large class size limited the kinds of activities she could have her students engage in. "Teachers can't let kids do the things they once were able to do. With so many kids in a class, it is just a hazard waiting to happen" (Conversation, April 22, 2000). Insufficient space posed additional restrictions. Her classroom was not large enough to facilitate activity-based learning nor did it give students enough personal space. "Kids have all kinds of real issues and if someone is having a bad day, there isn't even a space in the room where they can be alone for a while" (Conversation, April 22, 2000). Not having enough time to meet student learning needs or offer enrichment opportunities also concerned her.

> There is no time to work with kids except on my lunch hour when I'm doing lunchroom supervision.... In order to do the extra projects such as card workshops, I end up coming back to the school on weekends. It's the only time available because so many of our students are bussed. All these demands are so exhausting. In fact, after a day at school, I'm so tired that I'll just sit and doze for a half an hour before I can get into my car to go home for supper. It's too dangerous to drive at high traffic time when I'm so tired. So, I wait until the traffic dies down. Sometimes I have to have a nap after supper before I go back to school in the evening. I really have to ask myself, "What is wrong with this picture?" (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

She voiced frustration over a teaching contract that defined class size and placed added pressure on students and teachers. "Because we have so many kids enrolled...our ratio increased. It is just crazy" (Conversation, April 22, 2000).

Large class size, not having time to talk with individuals and not having sufficient space to work in caused stress for her and for students. Lorraine described how students voiced resentment over the impact of these conditions on them personally and how this changed context made students feel unsafe at school.

> The kids resent not having time to talk with their teachers and others who could offer them help. They are frustrated by not having space to work on projects. There isn't enough space to work in the classroom and because of safety issues, I can't let them work in the hall or in another location in the school. Sometimes I have let them go out into the hallway so they can at least plan without being interrupted by others who also have projects of their own to do. They are also concerned about how being part of a crowded class makes them feel unsafe. We had an interesting discussion in class and the kids said to me, "You can't protect us if someone goes crazy and tries to hurt others." But, if you have a small enough group of students, you can give them a sense of belonging and I think that it is the only way around this violence. Just putting in rules and telling kids that they can't do this or that is not where it is at. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

In order to deal with the increase in class size, others, who had responsibilities of their own to handle, stepped in to help. The administration, librarian and guidance counselor each taught classes of students so that the pupil-teacher ratio in the school was more manageable. Although this method of reducing the ratio was somewhat beneficial, it caused other problems. At times, no one was in the office to assist students or, the counselor was unavailable

> when a kid is having a crisis.... Our librarian teaches, so if you want to book kids into the library for a presentation on the computers, you've got to try to find a time when you can all get together. With everyone teaching, there is very little help when you need it. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

Her concerns about the demands of teaching included the time spent in planning her program. Although she was very committed to the program and understood how beneficial it was for students, she was frustrated over the amount of time involved in planning. She never knew how much time a project would take. "When you work with this kind of program, you are negotiating curriculum with kids and you are never sure what direction they are going to go with it or how long it is going to take" (Conversation, June 4, 2000).

Her demanding schedule caused her to become fatigued and she voiced concern over not being able to cope. Lorraine's expectation of herself played a part in how she was coping.

> It's a job I've taken really seriously. I don't like to make judgements and it takes much longer to mark student work so that they grow from the experience. I feel badly that I have not been able to work in a coach capacity this year, as I have been able to do in the past. I like to be able to write back and make suggestions for the kids to try and, I like to be able to model that. But, with all of the art classes on top of everything else, it has just been too much. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

> I also tried to do portfolios this year because I think kids need lots of opportunities to write. I think that it is just as important that they share what they have written with one another. Sometimes we group around tables and I have them submit a certain number of rough drafts to show what they have been doing. Then we can pick one that they are willing to work on. But that has cut back on the amount of comment writing that I would prefer to do. I had to do it that way because taking the time to think carefully about how to word things and commenting on a student's writing so as not to discourage but rather encourage them to pick up the good ideas is so time consuming. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

Lorraine was committed to providing her students with opportunities to experience growth. When judgments were made that did not facilitate this growth, she voiced frustration. Unfortunately, this frustration caused further stress.

> We do lots of art projects in this integrated program and kids learn while they are doing the project. I've taught them to do a sort of design elements analysis that lends itself to any kind of art where they can do a little personal critique and grade themselves on their work habits. Together we arrive at a kind of credit and they realize that the judgment is not mine to make. When they are given this responsibility, they just keep getting better. I don't want to pick one student to give an award to, especially when it's a humanities class and they each have different strengths and produce very different projects. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

She again questioned why others, outside the school setting, were not more supportive of teachers. This lack of support was part of the changed context and appeared as a judgment of her school's program.

> I just wish that the people who are so gung-ho to judge schools on the basis of achievement exams would look at what is different about an

> alternative program. When they come in with waves of measurement, they don't cover any of the hard to measure kinds of things that we do, the kinds of things that go beyond what the test shows. It seems so unfair. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

Constant demands on her time did not permit her to contemplate what her retirement life would be like. As she described upcoming events, it was clear that she had little time to think about anything other than what she would have to accomplish before the end of June. "I will be very busy right until the very end" (Conversation, June 4, 2000). With all of the pressures of her final month at school, she looked forward to retirement as an escape. "I think to myself, okay just get through this one more time" (Conversation, June 4, 2000).

A Changed Context—Demands Outside of School

In addition to the demands at school, Lorraine was dealing with serious family matters. Her sister had been diagnosed with cancer and was given a short time to live. This devastating discovery had an impact on her as she continued to struggle with demands at school.

> When I got this news, I had a ton of stuff to mark but I just needed to go up to see her. It has been very overwhelming. Like the one weekend of trying to get stuff marked and then the drive back and forth to see my sister was way too stressful. It is still stressful some days depending on how things are going. The kids have been saying: "Haven't you got that marked?" (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

The news of her sister's illness confirmed her decision to retire. "This news certainly puts things in a different perspective than they might otherwise be at this point. It changes how important other things are as well, like getting this last project marked before the end" (Conversation, June 4, 2000).

As she tried to come to terms with her sister's illness, her son was diagnosed with a serious illness. The combination of these stresses was overwhelming.

> My sister is doing what she needs to do and although my son is not a hundred percent, he is thinking that he will try to work next week to see how that goes. But right now, I don't have time for anything. I've been trying to cope but between going to see my sister and going to the hospital

with my son and trying to get sub plans done, I have been going nuts. I just can't deal with anything else right now. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

A Changed Context—Demands In And Out of School Combine

When we met during the last week of school, Lorraine was exhausted. Demands in and out of school intensified. The school took a graduation field trip and she "was too tired to do anything with the kids." She had been up since 5:00 a.m. trying to do report card marks and still had more to do, partially because students had handed assignments in late.

> We write exams on Monday and Tuesday and that means a few anxious moments because I have to mark them, weight them and be ready to run report cards off on Tuesday night. On Monday, I have an exam to supervise and then a class to teach all afternoon. So I don't know how it will all get done. It is just crazy. And the kids haven't wanted to be there for two weeks. They have traded their desk chairs in on lawn chairs. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Lorraine's decision to retire earlier than planned was a result of the demands teaching placed on her. On her last day of school before she retired, she again confirmed why she was leaving.

> I know that being overworked is the original reason why I planned on packing it in and it still is. I thought, I don't want to work like this anymore. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Lorraine Tells a Story of the Future, A Story of Retirement

Although she was retiring under less than favorable conditions and was uncertain of what the future would bring, she looked forward to a reduction in stress and time to pursue personal interests.

> Well, I think I'm a learner and I don't anticipate that will stop. But, what I'll be learning will be for different reasons and may go in different directions. And even though I haven't really thought about long stretches of time when I would not be teaching, I've got a ton of things to do. Like all of the things that I have put off learning how to do and things I've set aside to do, like my sewing and art work. I haven't even sewn this year. It's just been enough to teach. (Conversation, April 22, 2000)

> I'm not quitting because I've got a lot of fancy plans. But I thought that if I didn't get painting pretty soon, I wouldn't be able to see what I was

> doing and so I had better get at it. Now I will have more time to do the things I have put on hold. (Conversation, June 4, 2000)

All plans for the future changed with the discovery of serious health concerns for her sister and her son. Although she struggled with how to cope and the uncertainty of her future, she was relieved to know she would have time to provide them with support. She spoke of how the change offered her a different perspective, a "big change in the kinds of things I worry about" (Conversation, June 4, 2000).

> Adjusting to this change is very hard and I haven't really dealt with it. I guess avoidance is a natural kind of thing but then I wake up in the middle of the night because I have obviously shuffled it off to the back of my head somewhere. But at least I know that I will have the time to be there and I'm grateful for that. Things have been put into perspective and I'm glad that I will have the time to be with her. And, my son is looking at his diagnosis from the point that it could be worse and that it is at least manageable. I look forward to having the time to investigate complimentary approaches to medication with him. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

Lorraine's plans for retirement originally included opportunities to pursue personal interests and time to engage in new learning. To safeguard periods of unstructured free time in retirement, she would not consider part-time teaching or job sharing. Neither was she interested in becoming a substitute teacher. However, she did not want complete separation from her past. Instead, she looked forward to maintaining contact by providing assistance. Each time we met, she spoke of how that involvement might evolve.

She talked of how she would miss the relationships she shared with students and teachers and of her wish to maintain contact with them in the future. She also indicated that she would miss "the kind of thinking that goes into planning to teach this way. There are such great people here and I want to maintain contact with. So, I don't see that retirement as an ending to my connection to school. When I'm retired, I'll stop in and have coffee with the staff. That way I'll be able to see the kids" (Conversation, June 5, 2000).

Offers from colleagues would make it possible for her to spend additional time with students and teachers.

> People in a couple of other schools have asked if I would come in and do workshops with their students. And I have already got a workshop for the first week in September. A friend of mine asked if I would have time to do paper mâché because her students are making mascots. I also have parents who want me to tutor and I will as long as the students buy into it. I'm not sure if I want to get any kind of regular thing going.... I don't mind helping out. And, a friend of mine has been talking to me about working at the university. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

While she was interested in maintaining contact with school, she looked for balance between over-commitment and too much unstructured free time.

> I don't want to take on things that are going to be another whole commitment. I need and want the freedom to spend my time in a way that does not tie me down too much. On the other hand, having too much unstructured free time is a concern as well. I worked with paintings for a year and I had a sabbatical year and both years were pretty unstructured. I found that I needed to discipline myself to get up, have a plan and do it. I don't need to spend my life going for lunch and that is a concern. But on the other hand, I think about how nice it will be to not have bells ringing to take me away from the things I enjoy. (Conversation, June 25, 2000)

On her last day of school, Lorraine indicated that she would be back to spend some time there after she retired.

> I am quite willing to come in and do specific kinds of things like cover the phones for the odd hour, so that people can have a lunch break. I can help at exam time by covering a class.... Certainly if they want someone to come in and do watercolors or a little coyote story here and there, I would be happy to help out. If I can come back and take the pressure off these points, it might help. So you see, there is no closure and it's better that way. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

Although she planned to maintain a connection to school and teaching, she indicated that she would miss the things that would never again be part of her life in the same way they had been in her teaching career. Her story of teaching was beginning to change as she said,

> I have caught myself coming across interesting things and thinking that they would be really good to have in my classroom. But then I remember

> that I am not going to be there. I'll just have to get used to it. I had a weepy moment the other day when I realized that the humanities class I was teaching would likely be the last one I would ever teach. That was a sad feeling because I will miss the excitement of watching kids come alive as they share their ideas. (Conversation, June 6, 2000)

In spite of relief that came from knowing she would not have to deal with the changed context of teaching, saying good-bye brought mixed feelings. Her story of teaching was coming to an end and this certain ending caused her to think of what had been.

> Yesterday I said good-bye to my students. After the awards assembly, they were just streaming into my classroom to say a quick good-bye. I was feeling a little weepy with some of them and their parents. They gave me a ton of stuff, many things that they had made. They presented me with an autograph book of their impressions and I found one entry to be particularly touching. The student wrote: "I don't know how to put into words the amount of gratitude and respect I have for you. You have taught me so much. I'm not talking about social or grammar in language arts. You taught me about life. I think that's what makes a great teacher. You're one in a million. (Conversation, June 30, 2000)

When Lorraine left teaching to retire, she knew herself as an artist, a learner and a teacher and planned to continue to live her life with a connection to each identity. Her story of teaching provided her with memories of a long and successful career. She would take these memories with her as she intended to continue to maintain some connection to school. Her story of teaching would change as she left but in a way that would allow her to continue to connect to her past. Treasured moments of the past and plans for the future changed however as she dealt with more immediate challenges in the summer.

Living Into Retirement

The Summer

Lorraine's summer was indeed challenging. Her days and nights were filled with providing care and support for her sister and her sister's children. It was not possible or appropriate to proceed with talk of retirement during the summer as revealed in our short telephone conversations.

> This has been a horrendous summer. I convinced my sister to come to Calgary for treatment and after spending four hours in the emergency ward, she was finally admitted to the hospital. Since then, I have been spending up to ten hours a day with her trying to assist with providing meditation and relaxation exercises. But, it is so frustrating because the facility is not conducive to conducting any sort of helpful intervention. (Conversation, August 23, 2000)

Following her sister's move from the hospital to a palliative care unit, stress began to take its toll.

> I thought that I had been holding up quite well through all of this but the last ten days have been really challenging. I've tried to complete a number of government forms in order to secure the funding needed to keep her in the palliative care unit.... I am stressed and teary. I am exhausted and struggle with seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. (Conversation, August 23, 2000)

In spite of the intensity of all she was dealing with, her habit of teaching surfaced. Right up until the time her sister told her to stop, Lorraine did everything in her power to try to make things better.

> It wasn't until she told me to stop that I was able to come to the realization that there wasn't anything else I could do. I know that is the teacher in me. When you teach, you never give up on trying to help kids. Even when it seems impossible to get anywhere, you never stop trying. That was a hard lesson to learn. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

Her story of teaching appeared briefly in a different context when she saw a back-to-school sign in a store and "couldn't resist buying token pencils and a glue stick." She said "it just felt right to buy them, even though I'm not going back to school next week" (Conversation, August 23, 2000).

Lorraine spent many hours beside her sister offering support and encouragement until she passed away at the end of the summer. Early in September, she called to say that she felt ready to continue our conversations.

<u>The Fall</u>

It was in the fall that Lorraine was able to begin to think about being retired. She spoke of "being in a better frame of mind than at the end of June" when she "couldn't

focus on anything" (Conversation, September 10, 2000). Now, she was experiencing another change in context where topics that appeared in pre-retirement conversations reappeared. Some topics that appeared in her story of retirement had a close connection to her story of teaching, while others changed significantly to reflect interests not connected to school.

Lorraine the Artist

Lorraine's interest in art continued to appear as a dominant topic in her post-retiring experience but with a new perspective. When she taught, she did not have enough time to pursue her own creative talents or interests. Neither did she have time to organize the wealth of art materials she collected while teaching. After she retired, she had time to devote to the organization of her art materials and to work on the many projects she started earlier and new ones she hoped to initiate.

> I've bought so much art stuff over the years and I need to get it organized and simplify all of it. Up until now, I didn't have a chance to go through it or to think about what I would pitch out or keep. I have to think about whether I even agree with the use of some of those things anymore. And I look forward to going back to the calligraphy guild that I haven't been to in a year. I have so many projects that I've started and need to finish and so I will be busy doing the things I really enjoy. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

> I've been busy making cards for the card sale with the calligraphy guild and I'm finding that I have too many things that I want to start on. (Conversation, October 19, 2000)

> Teachers have been asking me for lessons to use in their teaching and I don't have the faintest idea where to find them. So, I'm going through filing cabinets and I've got lots of time to do that. I'm finding all kinds of things that I thought I'd lost and even though it takes a lot of time to look through the many things I've collected, I'm enjoying having the time to discover what is there. (Conversation, October 19, 2000)

> Now that I have the time, I can go in whatever direction I choose. When I engage in art work, there is a new branching for me. Part of the branching is inward and part is outward because art is both inward and outward. When you are painting or trying to make sense of something that is out there in the universe, you are also learning about your body and how it accepts whatever it is that you create on the page. You don't really know

> what that will be until it is out there on the page. I am now trying to balance my inner growth. When I was teaching, I was so outward focused on school, kids and family. But now, I have time to balance outer growth with inner growth in my work. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

Lorraine's love of art continued to have a connection to past and future experiences of teaching. She left art material at the school she retired from, with the hope that "they will carry on with some of the stuff"(Conversation, September 10, 2000) she started. She spoke of the importance of allowing students to have access to a variety of materials and was willing to share her personal belongings. She also looked forward to using her knowledge of art and her personal collection of art materials in school settings in the future as a way to connect with students.

> Kids can do such great work when they have those kinds of things to work with and I have so many different kinds of things. I have stuff on doll making like fabric, phony hair and dollrods. Then I do paper art, so I have quilling paper, handmade paper, rolls of gift-wrap and everything to make cards with. I also do painting, so I've got umpteen different things to do that with like ink, colored crayons and felts. And then there are the stamps. I had to buy a little cabinet for all of my stamps. It has eighteen drawers but isn't big enough to hold over 120 stamps. I have done card workshops with kids and parents on weekends in the past and I may go back to the school and do a workshop in the spring because it is a very good leadership thing for kids and a lot of fun to do. (Conversation, October 19, 2000)

With time to organize materials, think about and engage in her own art work and maintain contact with teachers and students through the sharing of her knowledge of art, Lorraine's passion for art was rekindled. Her love of art, a love that began in childhood, would continue to be a significant part of her retirement life.

Lorraine the Learner

The importance of being open to new learning was confirmed for Lorraine during the time of her sister's illness. She spoke of how, as a teacher, she liked to think that she had answers and could "fix things and make things better." Her sister's illness however signaled the importance of being a learner.

> I taught for many years and liked to think I had answers. In this particular context however, I found that I needed to be a learner. I really felt like I could fix her but then I had to accept the fact that you can't always fix things and make them better. Some things can't be changed and that's when I learned a lesson I should have learned in kindergarten. I had to come to grips with knowing that the things I thought were important, things I've spent years rushing around doing, are not that important. Like talking with parents and all of the other things a teacher must do. You certainly can't take them with you when you die. (Conversation, September 10, 2001)

New learning signaled the importance of people in Lorraine's life.

> The most important thing that I've got is the people I love. In looking back, I've learned that I haven't paid enough attention to the fact that the kids who keep in touch with me may not remember any lesson I ever taught. But what they do remember is that I cared about them. It isn't the curriculum that really counts, it's that I cared. That is an important lesson I've learned. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

Lorraine's desire to learn continued into retirement with new vitality. She had time to devote to learning that involved finding answers to unanswered questions.

> I continue to experience some frustration in trying to explain to teachers about how the "big idea" works. I wonder if it is just a process and that experience fits into it. I do know that something like an independent study works into it and makes it an opportunity for everyone to engage in something that interests them. I know that it works in gifted education but wonder why gifted kids are the only ones who get to ask questions that intrigue them. I think it can work with all kids but it is a difficult concept to explain to teachers. Teachers need to have some knowledge about thinking skills in order to put things together for students that incorporate the "big ideas" and so I've been thinking about how to explain it to teachers so that all students can benefit. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

She also had time to pursue new areas of learning.

> It is time to just be a learner instead of a teacher. I belonged to the Bow Valley Music Club but I haven't gone in two years so I will consider going back to that. I am also interested in learning about Tai-Chi. I've always been interested in eastern philosophies and instead of just having an intellectual grasp of what it is about, I want to actually learn how to do it, to experience what it means. I walk every morning for an hour and although it's good exercise, I'm learning to listen and carefully watch the world around me. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

> I guess what is really important to me is that learning was the key to my teaching and it will continue to be the key to my life in retirement. I will keep on learning and see where it will take me. I've been working with a teacher in mathematics and I'm really interested in mathematical thinking. I have always thought that I would love to learn more about math even though I began at a very early age to think that I wasn't good at it. I struggled with it throughout my schooling and had to give up basketball in grade twelve to get math tutoring. I passed the final exam but didn't have the faintest idea what I was doing. Now, I'm reading mathematical biographies and I'm beginning to think that before I die, I might actually think mathematically. That is something I've dreamed of but never thought was possible. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> There are so many things that I still want to read and learn about. Somewhere I have a box full of slips of paper that tell all of the things I want to learn about and there are thousands. So I'll keep on learning and see where it takes me. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Having the time to pursue new learning was what she looked forward to before she retired. In retirement, she valued the freedom that came with having time to continue to be a learner.

Lorraine the Teacher

Talk of school continued to be a significant part of our conversations after Lorraine retired. Her passion for teaching re-surfaced as she confirmed her belief in an approach that engaged students in inquiry. As she described the theory behind this approach and what it could do for student learning, she spoke of past experiences in a voice that placed her in the present. Although she had retired, she spoke like a teacher who had not left teaching.

> The theory I like to work with is the big picture idea.... You know it is not just linear, although you have to have some kind of plan. I guess it is both linear and holistic because you are always getting into what the kids bring to the learning.... You can do some preliminary things, like picking selections in literature, but the kids might want to bring in other inquiries and these need to be included. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

Her enthusiasm for teaching was closely linked to student learning. In order to have an impact on student learning, she continued to do workshop presentations, tutor students and think about designing resources for teachers to use.

> I'm doing a session at a conference in February for teachers on drama. I'm also working with a young man who is preparing to write a major exam. He really wants to beef up his reading and writing and I find that very exciting. It has really made me think of how important it is to spend time with kids helping them to figure things out. I'm going to design some task cards and a challenge board for teachers to have a look at and use with kids at school. I've got a lot of unit plans and I will also put together a three-year program like the one I did at my last school. It will show how concepts connect in different subjects over a period of three years and how teachers can use their own ideas and interests while following my program as an example. And, because this way of teaching is so complex, I'm going to write an explanation for teachers to follow. Another project that I may undertake is to write a booklet of lessons on graphic arts for kids. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Talk of school inevitably included reflections on her relationship with students and on their learning. Student learning and the relationships she built with them continued to be a significant part of her enthusiasm for teaching as she spoke of herself as a teacher still involved with students.

> It is very exciting when kids can learn from one another. As they engage in different things that all relate to the same theme, they make connections and gain deeper understandings. But what I think is really important is that kids know that teachers care about them. I think we have tried to make lessons teacher-proof. We think that curriculum guides and textbooks provide answers and will work with everybody. But now more than ever, it is important to build relationships. It is vital when you look at all of the things that kids are going through. The trick in teaching is to hook kids on something they want to do rather than what the curriculum says to do. That is the way to have an impact on student learning. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

> When students are encouraged to ask their own questions, their learning may take them in a different direction. Then it is the teacher's job to figure out how the new learning will connect to the next point. In other words, the teacher uses a flexible structure that allows student inquiries to fill in the gaps. The results are amazing when kids buy into this way of thinking. The things they put together, the things they think about, the connections they make, the way they think back to things they have done before and their ability to look at things from different perspectives, like an art or social studies or math perspective, just blow me away. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

As she spoke of past experiences with students and their learning, she indicated that she missed being part of that "wonderful exchange of ideas" (Conversation, January 19, 2000).

> Every once in a while I come across something that I think would make a great lesson. When you get kids to the point where they interact with a piece of writing or whatever it is, they present their own take on things and it is a truly great experience. I miss that part of teaching. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

School Related Demands No Longer Have an Impact

Lorraine spoke positively about past teaching experiences but was not prepared to commit herself to a great deal of school involvement in the future. The demands of teaching were still fresh in her memory and she had no desire to step back into that context.

> I know that there are a couple of schools that have groups of kids who really struggle with reading and I wouldn't mind helping them out, but I don't want to do it right away. I don't want to rush right back into classroom involvement and I certainly don't want to be at school full time nor do I want to spend my life volunteering. The reason I chose to retire was because I didn't have a life in the last couple of years. It was just so demanding. I don't want to go back to that kind of teaching where I didn't have time to be reflective. Maybe next fall, a year from now, I will be ready to provide some help. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

Demands at school consumed a great deal of time and the constant pressure of having to live with time restraints would not be missed.

> Now I have time to really think and time to reflect. When you teach, it gets to the point where you have no time to think and that is very frustrating. It is hard to deal with when you know that if you had more time, you could do so much more. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> Before I retired, I knew that I had reached the "magic number" and had enough years in so that I could retire if I wanted to. And I found myself thinking along those lines because I obviously wasn't very happy with having no time to do the things I really wanted to do or to do the kind of job that I knew I could do if I had the down time to get things ready. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Part of the reason she chose to stay away from the demands at school and not get too involved came from her sensitivity to teachers' needs. She would return to assist teachers and students if an invitation was extended.

> I did call the school and tell them that I was ready to do some work with teachers. We had talked earlier, before I retired, about the continuity for new teachers in the school and of how I could assist with that. They have been very good about not bugging me to jump right back in and so I am also sensitive to the fact that new people need to be able to do their own thing, not my thing. I don't mind helping them with art projects or as they engage in the kind of thinking about teaching that helps kids make connections. But I will only go back if they ask because it has to come from them. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

Out-of-School Demands Change

Dealing with serious family illnesses, shortly before and during the time Lorraine retired, placed great demands on her. These demands changed somewhat after her sister's passing but continued to have an effect. She spoke of the need to be in a "different kind of space and to create a balance in her life."

> With my sister being sick and then my son getting sick, I realized that I couldn't work the way I had been and be supportive to anyone. When it comes right down to it, who really cares that you give up your life for teaching. Sure, it's nice to keep in touch with kids or to have feedback from parents but, the bottom line is that I needed to make some choices about what my priorities in life are. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> If I get up feeling weepy then I know I need something to focus on. That's why I decided to do the card sale. It gave me something to work on and a deadline to meet. When you focus on trying to come up with new designs, you can't be worrying about a whole lot of other things. I was pretty compulsive there for a month or so when I was depressed about my sister. Then I had relatives here for a couple of weeks and didn't really have time to deal with things. Maybe I haven't yet but it was a way to avoid unpacking my sister's things or dealing with what to do with the fabric I had bought to make her clothes. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> I don't know if rushing into doing other things is the best way to cope with situations in life, like my sister's dying. I don't know if it just postpones things because I still have really bad times. It really makes me think about my own life and of how much time I have left to live. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

Time Changes

Before Lorraine retired, she spoke of the demands at school and others out of school that eventually combined to cause her great stress. The combination of stressful demands centered on not having enough time to deal with them. Now in retirement, time continues to have an influence on her life but it comes with choice. Some demands remain but others disappeared and this change allows her to have greater choice in how and where to spend her time. Although her days are filled with a variety of activities, her time is her own. Her days in retirement stand in contrast to the hectic days she spent when teaching.

> I can pick and choose how I want to spend my time and it is so much better than having to always be on the run just to survive. I have some projects that are more pressing than others, but they are slowly getting done. And my days are very busy. Yesterday for example, I went for my walk at 8:30 a.m. and didn't get back home until 9: 45 a.m. Then I unpacked a couple of boxes, changed my clothes and rushed off to my Tai-Chi class at noon. After that it was my turn to go for lunch with a friend and we went to a bookstore so that we could browse the books while we ate. Then we wandered into several stores and I didn't get home until 4:00 p.m. (Conversation, October 19, 2000)

> I still feel like I'm on holidays. I haven't felt pressure to get things done. My days are very full and time just flies. It's great to be doing the things I enjoy. Every morning, I take my son to work and then go for a long walk with my friend. It's a way to wake up and get my day started. I guess for me, being retired is like having a summer holiday list. You can plan to get a lot of things done if you stick at it. But, you can also choose to do things that you know you can accomplish and leave the others behind. I think about the time that I have left and know that it moves along. There are so many things I want to do and so many books I want to read. I'll have to narrow it down to what it is that I really want to know. The narrowing down will give me a focus. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> An interesting thing happened to me this week where it became very clear that I'm retired and have a choice in how to spend my time. For two days in a row, I rushed home because a computer was being delivered. When it didn't arrive, I called and was told that I would have to pick it up. I responded by saying that either the computer be delivered or they could take it back to the company I bought it from. For the first time in my life I am putting myself first. I have never put my own physical and mental well being ahead of anything else. But now I do and I don't view it as selfish

time either. I've been working on a calligraphy project that really puts things into perspective. The project shows how a potter, who is throwing a pot on the wheel, is first of all very concerned about centering the clay on the wheel and then not with the inside but the outside the pot. I've been like the potter and have spent my life concerned about the outside of the pot. But the pot's real function is the inside, the emptiness, the nothingness of the center. That is the part that is open to the universe, the part that you can connect with. It is that center that I am now trying to work on. When I get to the end of my life, I really want to be connected to the center of the pot, to the universe and know that I was able to do what I wanted to do in my life. So you see, taking time to do morning walks is very important to me. The walking offers much more than physical benefits. It allows me to think about purpose and becoming centered. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Since I retired, I've had time to think about time management. When you teach, you don't have time to think about your own priorities and what it is that you want out of life. When you are retired, you are able to manage your time far beyond just filling in a calendar. Now I choose what is important to me and I spend time on those things. My sister's death has changed my view of time and I am now very aware of it. Perhaps it comes down to realizing that completing projects or getting through a stack of papers does not mean that you have had a productive day or used your time in the best way. I haven't paid enough attention to the fact that spending time with people to re-establish relationships is a great use of time and that is what I am doing. (Conversation, January 19, 2201)

Income Changes

Although Lorraine was not concerned about financial matters before she retired, she spoke of how unexpected events caused her to be more aware of her monthly pension income.

In retrospect, I would say to people who plan to retire that they should up-grade all major appliances, have their house furnace checked, do any major repairs to their homes and really think about what kind of expenses they might run into. You know how they talk about the teachers' pension as one a teacher can live on with dignity. Well, that's a crock. I'm not spending a lot of money. In fact, I am now living on what I used to pay on my Visa bill each month. I know that I can't buy the things I could before I retired and it comes down to not having much money to get the odd thing in the house fixed. I do have some weaknesses when it comes to buying fabrics and books, but on the amount of pension I receive, I can't buy the things I could before I retired. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

In spite of living with less income, she viewed the change in financial status as a challenge she was willing to accept.

> There is a certain challenge in living with less money. I tend not to splurge now as I did when I taught and that's fine. There have been times in my life when I was worse off and I always think about people who lived through the depression. Sometimes there is strength of character that comes from having less. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Letting Go

Another topic that was not part of Lorraine's pre-retirement story was the letting go of teaching materials. She had collected a wealth of materials, but six months after she retired, she was ready to let some of it go.

> I've got so much stuff and at one time I thought that I should just take it over to the dumpster and get rid of it. But it is just too hard to throw out. So instead, I'm having a garage sale and then, if teachers are still not interested, maybe it could be thrown out. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Living Into the Future

Before Lorraine retired, she commented on what her future might be like. She expected to stay involved in art, learning and teaching activities. After she retired, these interests continued to be a significant part of her retirement life.

> The people at my school have been great and it is really like having a second family. They brought a ton of food over when my sister died and had a retirement celebration for me this fall. I have also been in to spend a couple of hours helping the secretaries to give them a break at lunchtime and will continue to do so. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

> I was back in the school to work with the grade eight teachers on program planning and watercolors. And I'm working with one teacher on planning the curriculum in math and science around the idea of a paradigm shift. It is not easy to explain, but I'm more than willing to provide assistance as teachers engage in this kind of thinking about teaching because it is so exciting. So, I'm still getting to do the things that I enjoyed most about teaching. And the things I hated, I don't have to do anymore and I don't miss them. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> As far as future plans for school are concerned, I think that I will want to continue to work with kids because it is exciting. I would really like to try an integrated arts approach on a small scale with kids who struggle with reading and use reading, writing and drawing together to see if that makes

> any difference. And, although I don't want to commit to being at the school on a regular basis, at some point I won't mind doing art stuff or running a card workshop or working with students who struggle with the English language. I would like to maintain contact with the school for the next couple of years because there are kids there who have been very special to me. Going back would give me a chance to talk with them. After that I don't expect it will have such a strong influence on me. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

She was grateful for a connection to school in that she could continue to take advantage of "opportunities for intellectual stimulation" (Conversation, November 24, 2000).

Retirement is Another Passage

Although Lorraine had a "difficult start" to her retirement, one she "wouldn't have chosen to take," she spoke of how she thought it was "going to be good" (Conversation, September 10, 2000).

> I've learned an important lesson about time. You have to make every day a good one in some way because you never know. That is not always easy when you don't have other peoples' needs driving your life. When I taught, I had a need to help others and when I left, I had to deal with having that need fulfilled. I think there are all kinds of ways that you can meet that need, like volunteering time in schools for example. (Conversation, September 10, 2000)

> I don't think of leaving teaching as an ending. Although you are not exactly sure where you are going, there is no reason why you can't take all of the stuff you have been working on with you. I don't seem to have had a clear break between teaching and retirement. I had a family break more than anything else when my sister died, but that really helped to put my priorities in order. So, I don't see retirement as a huge break from what was. Certainly being open to new ideas helps. I see hope in viewing challenges in life this way. I know that I was able to create a sense of harmony in the classroom when I taught and can create harmony in my life now when things seem to be a mess or there is chaos. So, when there is uncertainly, I don't look at it as a negative but as something exciting, something challenging. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

> Retirement is not a stopping place for me. It is not an ending but a moving on to the next level, another passage. I see it as a time to reflect and to think about what I am doing and where I am going. It is really quite freeing because I can go in whatever direction I want to. And, I'm trying to make something out of each day by doing something useful, somethin

> that I want to do and something that I need to keep working away at. One of the things that I want to do is to be fit and so I'm walking everyday. I also want to work my way through novels of prize-winning authors. I've been sewing for little people for Christmas and that makes me feel good. I'm pretty optimistic about things and plan to be open to new ideas. To shut down and not be open to external things causes problems. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

> I really want to be connected to the center of the pot, to the universe. And even though I don't want to leave a lot of things undone, I really don't ever want it to be all done either. There are so many things…so many things I want to read, art work I feel compelled to do, classes I would like to take and on and on. So, I have a focus and I'm enjoying the journey. (Conversation, January 19, 2001)

Lorraine shared her thoughts about a favorite children's story that she "uses as a metaphor to live by." She retold the story in her own words.

> I use the metaphor of "The Alphabet Tree" by Leo Lionni to describe how things connect for me. One day, two little ants were out walking and one of them saw the alphabet tree. The other ant looked over and asked why he called it the alphabet tree because it looked like an ordinary tree. The other little ant then describes how at one time, all of the letters in the alphabet hung out in that tree and had a good time until a breeze came along and blew some of them off. The other letters were so scared that they climbed down and huddled together in a chaotic mess at the bottom. When the storm was over, they were still lying in a pile of jumble when a word bug came along. He asked what they were doing and they told of how they had been caught in a storm and were too afraid to get back into the tree. The word bug then told them that if they were to get themselves together into groups of two, three, four or even more and got back onto the tree as words, they would be much stronger and that a wind would not be able to blow them apart. So the letters started making words and spelled out words that related to their experience, like bug, wind and so on. Then, when the wind did come along, they found that they were much more connected. They were happy until a caterpillar came along. The caterpillar told them how confused they were to have words here and there that were not connected. He suggested that they get together and actually say something. So the words got together and came up with things like, "The wind is bad." They were happy until the caterpillar came back and told them that they had misunderstood him. He told them that it is not good enough to just say anything, that they had to say something that mattered, something that made a difference. So, the sentences got together and came up with the message: "Peace on Earth, good will to all men." When the caterpillar came back, he told them that their message was worth dealing with and he put all of the sentences on his back and went off to tell the president.

I used this metaphor when I taught to help kids see how things connect. I use it now that I'm retired as I think about how things connect in life. Just as letters connected to make words and words connected to make meaningful sentences in the story, so do things connect in my personal life. I see how things connect as I move along through life but what really interests me is that life is like a receding horizon, a horizon that keeps moving. When you get to the top of one hill, there is a new horizon to move towards because the horizon line changes. Even though you are not exactly sure where you are going, you take your experiences with you as you unfold what you've done before. There is no reason why you can't take all of the stuff you have been working on with you. I will take what I have with me as I open up to new opportunities, advice and new ways of thinking. And I can say to myself, I've gotten this far, surely I can make the next hill to view a new horizon. (Conversation, November 24, 2000)

I usually start out with a plan but then consider new ideas. I am open to advice, information and new opportunities that come from the outside. I've learned from complexity theory that even though there are all kinds of things going on at different levels, in the end, things work towards a much more holistic outlook. I see life that way. There are cycles and passages you go through. At times, you go along but then something happens that causes turbulence. You can either let it push you under or you can figure out how to make it work or how to work around it and go on. It is those kinds of moments that cause you to solve problems. What I've learned from complexity theory has given me a sense of where I stand in the world and that it is okay to be random and open to new ideas. I don't like all sorts of things hitting my life but I know that they make me rise to the occasion. I did different things with my sister that I wouldn't have been able to do if I hadn't been open to new ideas and I see hope in viewing challenges in life this way. (Conversation, December 22, 2000)

A Year Later

During a conversation almost one year after Lorraine retired, she described her life and how it had changed. Her days were packed with a variety of personal interest activities as well as activities that maintained her connection to school. She accepted an offer to work with a group of parents and teachers to change their school's image and was excited about the possibility of sharing her expertise.

I think it would be very exciting if the school decided to work this way. Even though change is scary, if they are willing to give it a try, it can be a very powerful tool for kids. Kids just need an opportunity to make connections. It is fascinating to hear students talk about their pieces and to hear their moments of insight. And even though I'm busier than I would like to be, I'm okay with it because it is what I'm interested in. If teachers

> are really interested in doing this kind of teaching, then I'm interested because I believe so strongly in how good it is for kids. It is kind of like passing the torch and it is someone else's turn to do this now. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

In addition to working with parents and teachers, students in the school she retired from asked her to help them with a mural. She accepted their invitation and spent time working after school and on weekends so that the project could be completed before the end of the school year. Lorraine continued to live her life as an artist, learner and teacher but in a changed way. During this final conversation, Lorraine explained who she was.

> I know that retirement is a huge kind of change but I'm retired and I'm working on all of the things that are important in my life like my art, learning and teaching. I see my life and who I am as a weaving and I continue to work on that weaving. When you start off, there are certain givens, the warp threads. But then, there is choice in the weft threads that weave through them. Sometimes a weft thread, like a color for example, will run across the top of your weaving for a couple of rows and then run behind other threads until you need it again. Then it will come out somewhere else. One such thread for me is the people in my life. I now realize how important they are. Before, I was so concerned with raising a family and getting enough equity built up that I didn't have time for the people I loved or my friends. But now I have the time and the threads that got left up at the top of the weaving are now back in there again. For me, the warp threads are still there but the weft is changing because I have time to do other things. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Retelling Lorraine's Shifting Story to Live By

Artist, Learner, Teacher

Throughout our conversations, Lorraine described her interest in art, a lifelong interest that began in childhood. As a child, she enjoyed using colored pencils to draw pictures of faces and horses and as she got older, she continued to find ways to express herself through the arts. She would have pursued a career in art had her parents not set different aspirations for her. Instead of attending art school, they encouraged her to enter university to obtain an arts degree in English, an education they felt would guarantee her an adequate standard of living. Fortunately, she was able to fulfill their wish and satisfy her own interests when she accepted a position as librarian in the art department of a

large city library. A year later she married and moved to a different province where she found employment as a freelance artist in a commercial art company. Although she enjoyed the challenge her work presented and would have continued her career in commercial art, she questioned the impact she was having on the lives of others. It was at this point in her life, that her story to live by changed to include a story of teaching.

Her changed story to live by combined personal interest in art along with teaching and the opportunity to engage students in activities that invited them to express themselves through the arts. Her excitement over learning and determination to make student learning meaningful had a direct impact on her students. Interest in art and learning appeared as strong threads that were woven together in her story of teaching. Art, learning and teaching became interwoven in her story to live by. As an artist, she created as she learned and taught. As a learner, she investigated ways to include art in her teaching. As a teacher, she continually looked for ways to help students learn through the arts. Lorraine was an artist, a learner and a teacher and her identity formed as these threads interwove in her story to live by.

"Not Having Any Time is Too Hard"

She felt her story to live by was continuously challenged by demands at school that imposed great pressure and overshadowed the threads of her story that told of her as an artist and learner. As she struggled to provide students with the kind of learning she felt they deserved, she knew she did not have enough time. Constant demands at school not only threatened the quality of teaching she tried to maintain but imposed their way into her personal life outside of school as well. Finally, she knew the time commitment she made to teaching was "so unmanageable in terms of all the increasing expectations" (June, 2000). She was not willing to stay. "How I want to teach and how I want to feel about teaching has been eroded away to the point where I have to make a moral decision, the decision to retire" (April, 2000). "I always resolved that if I ever got to the stage

where I was spending more time whining about teaching than I was being creative, it was time to do something else. I'm at that point now" (April, 2000).

Demands at school consumed her energy and left her without time to plan for her future. As she described upcoming events in her last week of school, it was clear that she had little time to think about anything other than what she had to accomplish before she left. "I'll be very busy until the very end" (June, 2000). She explained that she did not have "great plans for retirement" (June, 2000) but instead looked "forward to it as an escape" (June, 2000). She spoke of the resentment she felt in leaving teaching before she originally planned but was not willing to place her well being at risk by staying.

> The only part that I resent is that I finally got to teach in a way that I believe is best for students. But, the circumstances are such that I don't have time to do a decent job of it. (April, 2000)

"I would have taught for another five or six years if there had been decent working conditions" (June, 2000). "You try to survive but it is too hard to keep on top of everything. That's when I knew that I didn't want to do this anymore" (April, 2000).

As she thought of stepping off the school landscape, she struggled with what she would miss. She would miss the enthusiasm of response from students as they engaged in learning that was not imposed on them. She would miss watching students with different abilities work together and seeing those who had not been successful do "really great things through the arts" (April, 2000). Lorraine gathered strength from her students and would miss the relationships she shared with them in the classroom. Positive experiences at school would not be part of her life in the same way they had been in her teaching and she spoke of the loss.

> I've caught myself coming across interesting things and thinking that they would be really good to have in my classroom. But then I remember that I'm not going to be there. I had a weepy moment the other day when I realized that the humanities class I was teaching would likely be the last one I would ever teach. That's a sad feeling because I will miss the excitement of watching kids come alive as they share their ideas. (June, 2000)

"There is No Closure and It's Better That Way"

Lorraine requested that her colleagues not hold a separate celebration in honor of her retiring. Part of the reason she made this request was because she felt it would be too difficult to handle the emotional aspects of saying good-bye. However the main reason she chose to go silently, with reduced recognition from her colleagues, was that she intended to return to the school. Her story to live by was tightly bound to the school landscape, and, instead of making a clear break, she told a story of how she would maintain contact. "I don't see retirement as an ending to my connection to school. When I'm retired, I'll stop in and have coffee with the staff. That way I'll be able to see the kids" (June, 2000). She also planned to assist teachers if they requested her help in and out of the classroom and told others that "it wasn't really over because I'll be back. There is no closure and it's better that way" (June, 2000). She did not expect her story to live by to change when she retired because she planned to stay connected to the school landscape.

Storying Into the Future

Lorraine spoke very little of retiring before she left teaching. As she looked to the future, she said, "I'm not quitting because I've got a lot of fancy plans" (June, 2000). Instead, she looked forward to restoring balance among the threads of her story to live by.

> Even though I haven't really thought about long stretches of time when I would not be teaching, I've got a ton of things to do. Like all of the things that I've put off learning how to do and things I've set aside to do, like my sewing and art work. (April, 2000)

As she looked forward to having time to find balance in her story to live by, she voiced slight concern over "having too much unstructured free time" (June, 2000). "I worked with paintings for a year and I had a sabbatical year and both years were pretty unstructured. I found that I needed to discipline myself to get up, have a plan and do it" (June, 2000). Any concern over unstructured free time disappeared however when she

spoke of "how nice it will be to not have bells ringing to take me away from the things I enjoy" (June, 2000).

Unexpected Change

As Lorraine worked hard to meet deadlines at school, she struggled with thoughts of how to deal with family illness when her sister and son became seriously ill in the last months before she retired. She spoke of how stressful and demanding her life was outside of school as she tried to adjust to the fact that her sister was terminally ill. In order to deal with this stress, she did not allow herself time to think about it during the school day.

> Adjusting to this change is very hard and I haven't really dealt with it. I guess avoidance is a natural thing but then I wake up in the middle of the night because I have obviously shuffled it off to the back of my head somewhere. (June, 2000)

The combination of in and out of school demands overwhelmed her and as she thought of her upcoming retirement, she was relieved to know that, without constant pressures of school, she would have the time to spend with loved ones in their time of need.

"This Has Been a Horrendous Summer"

With the start of summer, Lorraine experienced a significant shift in her life as she put aside any thoughts of teaching and school to be with her sister. When she stepped off the school landscape, she moved from full-time teaching to full-time care giving. In this changed context she tried relentlessly to bring quality of life to her sister in her last days of life. "I've been spending up to ten hours a day with my sister, trying to assist with providing meditation and relaxation exercises" (August, 2000). In addition to having to face the reality of losing her sister, she worried about how to deal with her son's illness. The only relief she felt came from knowing that she now had time to do what needed to be done to help others.

The summer following Lorraine's retirement was not like summers of the past. The summer was life shattering and posed a break in her life story. She recalled the feeling. "I am stressed and teary. I'm exhausted and struggle with seeing the light at the

end of the tunnel" (August, 2000). Thoughts of teaching that included planning learning activities for students did not surface as they had in previous summers. However, experiences in the summer did connect to her story of teaching as she sought out alternative ways to deal with her sister's suffering. She spoke of how she "tried to fix things" (August, 2000).

> I thought that if I tried hard enough I could make things better for her just like I have done in the past for students. It wasn't until she told me to stop that I realized that I could not fix things and there wasn't anything else I could do. (August, 2000)

Lorraine's story to live by, as a teacher who never stopped trying to improve things for others, was significantly challenged by this changed context.

Just as her life moved straight ahead on a focused path before she retired, so did the life she lived during the summer. However, after her sister passed away at the end of the summer, her story to live by shifted and changed again. She was left with wonders about how her changed story to live by would unfold in the future. In spite of feelings of great loss, she looked forward to the future with the hope that her changed story to live by would connect to the story she lived before she retired. As she thought about days ahead, she spoke of being ready to begin her story of retirement. She looked forward to the future and the opportunity to pick up the threads of her original story to live by, a story that had been overpowered by demands on and off the school landscape. In the months that followed, she recalled her story to live by as it had been in the past and told of how it connected to her changed story to live by on a different landscape, the landscape of retirement.

"Now That I Have the Time, I Can Go in Whatever Direction I Want"

Lorraine's story to live by in retirement tells of the joy she found in having the time to express her creative talents. Before she retired, she was frustrated with not having enough time to engage in creative activities. After she retired, she was excited about having the time to pick up the thread that told of her as an artist with time to "go in

whatever direction I choose" (November, 2000). As a result, she experienced "new branching." She explained this process.

> When I engage in art work, there is new branching for me. Part of the branching is inward and part is outward because art is both an inward and outward branching. When you are painting or trying to make something that is out there in the universe, you are also learning about your body and how it accepts whatever it is that you create on the page. (November, 2000)

New branching came from having time to balance inner and outer growth, time she did not have when she taught. "When I was teaching, I was so outward focused on school, kids and family. But now, I have time to balance outer growth with inner growth in my work" (November, 2000).

"It is Time to be a Learner Instead of a Teacher"

Just as interest in art continued to be a thread in Lorraine's story to live by, so too was learning. Before she retired, demands of teaching did not allow her enough time to pursue new learning in depth. After she retired however, the pursuit of new learning became a significant part of her changed story to live by. "Learning was the key to my teaching and it will continue to be the key to my life in retirement" (November, 2000). Learning opportunities she planned to renew and initiate included a return to the Bow Valley Music Club to learn more about music and, enrollment in Tai-Chi classes to gain knowledge and experience of eastern philosophies. Physical exercise was also part of her plan to experience new learning. "I walk every morning for an hour and am learning to listen and carefully watch the world around me" (September, 2000). In addition to the pursuit of personal learning, she became part of a learning team and spent hours searching out information to share with her partner. An indication of her commitment to new learning was revealed when she said, "I'm reading mathematical biographies and I'm beginning to think that before I die, I might actually think mathematically. That is something I've dreamed of but never thought was possible" (December, 2000).

Lorraine was excited about her learning and looked forward to the endless possibilities it would present.

> There are so many things I still want to read and learn about. Somewhere I have a box full of slips of paper that tell all of the things I want to learn about and there are thousands. So I'll keep on learning and see where it takes me. (November, 2000)

"I Learned a Lesson I Should Have Learned in Kindergarten"

Being a learner is a thread in her story to live by and its strength was confirmed during the time of her sister's illness.

> I taught for 33 years and liked to think I had answers. In this particular context however, I found that I needed to be a learner. I really felt like I could fix her but then I had to accept the fact that you can't always fix things and make them better. Some things can't be changed and that's when I learned a lesson I should have learned in Kindergarten. I had to come to grips with knowing that the things I thought were important, things I've spent rushing around doing, are not that important. (September, 2000)

"The Most Important Thing I've Got is the People I Love"

In response to the realization that she could not always "fix things or make them better" (September, 2000), Lorraine spoke of the importance of others. Although she had been a caregiver throughout her teaching career, her sister's death caused a shift in the importance of people in her story to live by. "The most important thing I've got is the people I love" (September, 2000). She included students as she recalled how important they had been to her.

> In looking back, I've learned that I haven't paid enough attention to the fact that kids who keep in touch, may not remember any lesson I taught. But what they do remember is that I cared about them. It isn't the curriculum that really counts, it's that I cared. That is an important lesson I've learned. (September, 2000)

People are a priority in her changed story to live by.

"I Don't Think of Leaving Teaching as an Ending"

Even though Lorraine left teaching because the demands were overwhelming, she knew she would miss the excitement she experienced when students were engaged in

learning and the relationships she shared with them. She explained the connection she had with others on the school landscape. "When I taught, I had a need to help others and when I left, I had to deal with having that need fulfilled somehow" (September, 2000). In order to accomplish that goal, she looked for ways to connect to her story of teaching. She tutored a young man in preparation for upcoming exams and offered to teach watercolor classes to students or be the "extra set of hands" in the classroom if teachers make that request. She was willing to assist students who struggle with reading and writing and teachers who look for new ideas by providing sessions at conferences and workshops. She also left an open invitation to work with teachers at her last school in support of their learning and teaching. Although only one teacher accepted her offer, she was excited about the opportunity to work with a colleague.

Lorraine was no longer a full-time teacher but maintained a connection to her story of teaching when she spoke as though she were still at school. Perhaps her story to live by would continue to connect to the past as she looked to the future with the hope of spending time with students. "I would like to maintain contact with the school for the next couple of years because there are kids there who are very special to me. Going back would give me a chance to talk with them" (November, 2000).

Lorraine's story to live by portrayed her as an artist, a learner and a teacher. When she taught, her story as artist and learner was overshadowed by the dominance of her story as teacher. When she retired, her story as teacher became less dominant. Even though she spoke of the possibility of maintaining a connection to her past story to live by on the school landscape, she was not willing to commit to a great deal of school involvement. She had no desire to accept a teaching commitment that would take away her freedom of choice and consume her free time. "The reason I retired was because I didn't have a life in the last couple of years. I don't want to go back to that kind of teaching where I didn't have time to be reflective" (September, 2000).

"Retirement is a Time to Think About the Time I Have Left to Live"

Lorraine often described how a full-time teaching commitment left her pressed for time. She was constantly bombarded by demands that consumed her waking hours and left her with little free time or energy to pursue personal interests. After the summer, however, she began to enjoy the freedom that having enough time offered and spoke of the joy in being able to choose how she wanted to spend her time. "I still feel like I'm on holidays. I haven't felt pressure to get things done" (December, 2000).

With time to engage in art and learning, her days in retirement are very busy and "time just flies" (December, 2000). Each day begins with the routine of going for a walk with a friend. Then as the day progresses, she devotes time to tasks that are more pressing but knows that she can "put them on hold" if she chooses to do something else.

> For me, being retired is like having a summer holiday list. You can get lots of things done if you stick at it, but you can also choose things that you know you can accomplish and leave the others behind. (December, 2000)

In spite of knowing she is free to choose how to spend time in retirement, she is also aware that time has limits. Before she retired she was not concerned about having to deal with time limits in the future, but was somewhat concerned about having too much free time and accomplishing little. Now that she is retired, she wonders how to refine choice in her many interests in order to have enough time to do the things that are most important to her. Having an interest in many things and knowing that it is impossible to pursue all of them has made her very conscious of time.

> I think about the time I have left and know that it moves along. There are so many things I want to do and so many books I want to read. I'll have to narrow it down to what it is that I really want to know. The narrowing down will give me a focus. (December, 2001)

In addition to experiences of retirement that make her aware of time limits, she recalled gaining first hand knowledge of how precious time is when her sister died. "I've learned an important lesson about time. You have to make every day a good one in some way, because you never know" (September, 2000). "So, I'm trying to make something out of

each day by doing something useful, something that I want to do and something that I need to keep working away at" (December, 2000).

"Time Moves Along and Now I Choose What is Important to Me"

In recognition of time limits and the uncertainty of life, Lorraine began to set priorities. One priority was to create balance in her life.

> When it comes right down to it, who really cares that you gave up your life for teaching. Sure, it's nice to keep in touch with kids or to have feedback from parents but the bottom line is that I needed to make some choices about what my priorities in life are. (December, 2000)

She recalled an incident that caused her to think of her past and of how she had never put her own physical and mental well being ahead of other things. After waiting for several days for a computer to be delivered, she called the company to say that she would no longer waste her time waiting for them to appear. The incident provided her with a clear picture of how she had always put other people or things before herself. It also prompted her to think about the importance of her own time and to put herself first, something she had not done before. To further illustrate the importance of putting herself first, she used the metaphor of a potter throwing a pot on a wheel.

> A potter is first of all very concerned about centering the clay on the wheel and then not with the inside but the outside the pot. I've been like the potter and have spent my life concerned about the outside of the pot. But the pot's real function is the inside, the emptiness, the nothingness of the center…. When I get to the end of my life, I really want to be connected to the center of the pot, to the universe and know that I was able to do what I wanted to do in my life. (January, 2001)

Putting herself first came with no intent to be selfish about time. Time for Lorraine involved the cultivation of relationships she had with others. Establishing and reconfirming relationships with people became another priority. "I haven't paid enough attention to the fact that spending time with people to re-establish relationships is a great use of time and that is what I am now trying to do" (January, 2001).

"There is a Challenge in Living With Less Money"

Before Lorraine retired, her story to live by did not include financial concerns. After she retired however, she became aware of the impact that living with less income had on her life. Her monthly pension amount was significantly less than the salary she earned when she taught and she spoke of the difference.

> I'm not spending a lot of money. In fact, I am now living on what I used to pay on my Visa bill each month. I know that I can't buy the things I could before I retired and it comes down to not having much money to get the odd thing in the house fixed. (January, 2001)

Although she was aware of the reduction in income, her life did not change significantly because of the way she chose to view the change. She did not accept the loss of income as a problem but instead spoke of it as a challenge. "Sometimes there is strength of character that comes from having less" (January, 2001).

Letting Go

A symbol of Lorraine's changed story to live by appeared towards the end of our conversations. After spending a great deal of time going through her collection of teaching units and classroom materials, she contemplated what to do with things she knew she would not use in the future. She thought about throwing them into the "dumpster and just get rid of them" but found it "too hard to throw them out" (June, 2000). Instead, she planned a garage sale for teachers. She was ready to "let go" of thirty-three years of teaching materials but would do so in a way that acknowledged how much she cared about a lifetime accumulation of teaching resources. Her willingness to "let go" was an indication that she planned to move on and make changes.

"Retirement is Not a Stopping Place For Me"

Lorraine's view of retirement was reflected in her view of life. She viewed life as cycles and passages and saw retirement as "another passage."

> I see life that way. There are cycles and passages you go through. At times, you go along smoothly but then something happens that causes

> turbulence. You can either let it push you under or you can figure out how to make it work or how to work around it and go on. (December, 2000)
>
> Being open to new ideas helped when my sister was dying and I'm trying to do the same with my son. I see hope in viewing challenges in life this way. I know that I was able to create a sense of harmony in the classroom when I taught and can create harmony in my life now when things seem to be a mess or there is chaos. So, when there is uncertainly, I don't look at it as a negative, but as something exciting, something challenging. (November, 2000)
>
> Therefore, retirement is not a stopping place for me. It is not an ending but a moving on to the next level, another passage. I see it as a time to reflect and to think about what I am doing and where I am going. It is really quite freeing because I can go in whatever direction I want to" (December, 2000). "Even though I don't want to leave things undone, I really don't ever want it to be all done either. So, I have a focus and I'm enjoying the journey. (January, 2001)

"When You Get to the Top of One Hill, There is a New Horizon"

As Lorraine storied herself into the future, she used a favorite children's story to symbolize her new story to live by, a story that tells about moving on. The story is called the Alphabet Tree (Lionni, 1968) and it tells of how things connect in life. To Lorraine, it provides a metaphor for how she will take her story to live by with her as she continues to connect and move on.

> Just as letters connect to make words and words connect to make meaningful sentences in the book, so do things connect in my personal life. I see how things connect as I move along through life but what really interests me is that life is like a receding horizon, a horizon that keeps moving. When you get to the top of one hill, there is a new horizon to move towards because the horizon line changes. Even though you are not exactly sure where you are going, you take your experiences with you as you unfold what you've done before. There is no reason why you can't take all of the stuff you have been working on with you. I will take what I have with me as I open up to new opportunities, advice, and new ways of thinking. And I can say to myself that I've gotten this far and I can surely make the next hill to view a new horizon. (November, 2000)

Lorraine will accept the challenge of retirement and look forward to the excitement it may bring as she moves on to new horizons.

"I'm Retired and I'm Working on Things That are Important in My Life"

A year after Lorraine retired, she described her story to live by. "I know that retirement is a huge kind of change but I'm retired and I'm working on all of the things that are important in my life, like my art, learning and teaching" (June, 2001). She spoke of how she views her life and who she is as a weaving where vertical warp threads combine with horizontal weft threads to form a woven design, a weaving she continues to work on. She explained the metaphor,

> I see my life and who I am as a weaving and I continue to work on that weaving. When you start off, there are certain givens, the warp threads. But then, there is choice in the weft threads that weave through them. Sometimes a weft thread, like a color for example, will run across the top of your weaving for a couple of rows and then run behind other threads until you need it again. Then it will come out somewhere else. One such thread for me is the people in my life. I now realize how important they are. Before, I was so concerned with raising a family and getting enough equity built up that I didn't have time for the people I loved or my friends. But now I have the time and the threads that got left up at the top of the weaving are now back in there again. For me, the warp threads are still there but the weft is changing because I have time to do other things. (June, 2001)

CHAPTER VI: NOREEN'S STORY OF RETIRING FROM TEACHING

Chronicling Noreen's Experience of Retiring

Noreen's Story of Her Teaching Life

Early experience in life invited Noreen into the world of teaching. She spoke of an image of "being a teacher" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) composed in her pre-school years where playing school occupied hours in her day. As she grew older, the image was sustained by comments from family members who spoke respectfully of the teaching profession and encouraged her to become a teacher when she grew up. She described her childhood memories.

> I think I always wanted to be a teacher because my mother was a teacher. I grew up on a farm and I was so much younger than older brothers that I had to amuse myself by teaching my cats and playing school. Many of my father's family were teachers so that education and teaching were valued in our home. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

During her last year in high school, plans for the future changed slightly when the image of becoming a teacher shifted with her decision to pursue a nursing career. After touring a hospital however, she quickly enrolled in the faculty of education. She recalled with humor how the decision to become a nurse did not fit with the story she had lived for many years, the story that told of her becoming a schoolteacher.

> I went on a tour of the hospital but within two days, I went home and my nursing career was over. I thought I would like to teach nursing, but I knew teaching school was really what I wanted to do, so I switched over to education. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

After completing three years of university, she decided to apply for a teaching position. She recalled fond memories of her first year in the classroom.

> I applied to teach in a school and was hired that very day. It happened so fast. When I look back on that first year, I realize how naive I was. The daughter of the deputy minister of education was in my class but I was not concerned at all. Instead, I had a great year. A wonderful teaching partner mentored me by showing me how important it is to be kind to other teachers when they are starting out. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

The desire to teach stayed with Noreen even when she was not at school. During the time she left teaching to raise a family, she continued to engage in activities related to school and teaching. She acknowledged her love of teaching when she said,

> I think that when you are a teacher, you are always a teacher. I've taught for thirty-one years but even when I stayed home when my kids were little, I continued to teach them. Once a teacher, always a teacher. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> I remember how I felt when the first of September rolled around and I was not at school. It would just grab me to know that I was not going back. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

From the time she was a youngster until she retired, she recognized the value of education. Teaching and learning were part of her life. She spoke of the importance of "keeping abreast of professional development" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) as she continued to be a life-long learner. At the age of fifty, for example, she returned to university to complete a master's degree. Her childhood image of becoming a teacher became the story she lived until the day she retired.

Noreen's Pre-Retirement Story

Conversations with Noreen began approximately six months before she retired. During this pre-retirement time, she spoke of her teaching experience. As she described experiences at school, she explained them as contrasts. In other words, teaching offered numerous rewards but also presented demands and challenges. At times, rewards of teaching overshadowed demands she faced. On other occasions, demands of teaching intensified to consume her energy and minimize the rewards. In spite of the influence these contrasting opposites had on her life, she was able to maintain a balanced perspective and to leave the profession with an attitude that told of how she was "still loving teaching" (Conversation, January 31, 2001).

As Noreen told her story of teaching, rewards and demands were frequently spoken of in the same conversation. Although her description of one was followed by descriptors of the other, they did appear as separate influences in her experience at

school. The following section will describe rewards she enjoyed and challenges she faced as separate experiences.

Acknowledging the Rewards of Teaching

The first year of Noreen's teaching career launched her into a world that held meaning and purpose. She left university knowing she wanted to teach and, from that moment on, felt secure in knowing she had made the right decision. Her pre-retirement story told of many rewarding moments throughout her thirty-one year career.

> I feel good about my years in teaching. I am still giving it and feeling that I'm as flexible now as I have ever been. If it gets to the stage that you are counting the days left until you retire, that's a sign that you don't enjoy teaching any longer. But, I still do. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> I am having so much fun teaching this year that when somebody asked me how many days were left until the end, I didn't know because I don't think about my teaching like that. It's a really nice way to leave. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> Even though I am teaching a different grade level this year and have worked every prep and recess with kids, I feel very fortunate because children give hugs. That is special. I am keeping lots of fun things going in my classroom right until the very end because that makes school neat and the kids love it. The kids are ready to move on and so we are into celebrating. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Stories of her teaching experience acknowledged what she saw as qualities of a teacher.

> I knew intuitively what worked with kids and what needed to be taught. I have taught with wonderful teachers who also knew what kids needed in order to learn. That's a special gift teachers have. It takes common sense and intuitiveness is a gift that some teachers have. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

Noreen's pre-retirement story of teaching and the many positive experiences she had at school came from the relationships she shared with children, parents and colleagues. She specified the classroom as "a very special place" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) and identified the place outside of the classroom as the place "teachers must deal with" and where "you can see the games being played" (Conversation, January 31,

2001). In spite of challenges from outside the classroom, she was able to focus on what was important to her.

> You focus on the things you care about, on the kids and then you let the other stuff go. That is why I still love teaching. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> Teachers are often the normal part of a child's life. Teachers are there to make things special for kids. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> I know that the reason I have stayed teaching is the kids and wonderful parents. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Positive experiences at school caused her to think about what she would miss when she retired.

> I imagine when it comes to the very end, I will be very nostalgic. And, when the first day of school starts in September, it will be a hard one. In the past I would be visiting the teachers' store and making a list of what it was I wanted to finish before school started. So, that will be different. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

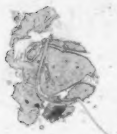
She also looked at the future and was hopeful for those who continue to teach. She spoke of the importance of mentorship and the potential of young teachers.

> I think that mentorship is important. It is your colleagues that can really help you out with teaching. It came to the foreground for me during a year I was subbing. When I walked into cold schools and nobody spoke to me, I made up my mind right there and then that I would always speak to colleagues and make new teachers feel welcome by providing them with help. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> I know there are good people coming up. Some of the young teachers are becoming administrators and are really a bright light. I know a new vice principal and he makes my day everyday with his enthusiasm and support. We need good people like that in administration. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Noreen loved teaching and would miss the special relationships she had built with students, parents and colleagues. In spite of the loss, however, she knew that it was time to retire. She expressed feelings about her decision to retire.

> I feel like I have fought the battles in education and it is time for someone else to do it. None of us are indispensable. When you die, six months later you are only a memory. Like when I left one school to teach in another,



> everyone told me that things would never be the same. I thought that the school would fall apart because I was leaving and had started new things at the school. But, you know, the school didn't fall apart and it was a big wake-up call for me. I wasn't as indispensable as I thought. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

> I feel lucky to be getting out now, at a time that I have chosen to leave. This is the first year I can honestly say since I started teaching in 1963 that I am able to let it go. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

> I feel relief. I do not have sad feelings because retiring is the right thing for me to do. (Conversation, June 30, 2001)

Noreen left school on the last day feeling secure in the knowledge that she had made the right decision to retire. Her decision was recognized and celebrated by others.

> From the year-end cards and letters I received, I feel like I have made a difference in the communities I taught in. I have been made to feel like I have made a difference in the lives of some children and that makes me feel good. (Reflections, June 30, 2001)

Acknowledging Challenges in Teaching

As Noreen spoke of how she would miss teaching and the rewards it had to offer, she also indicated she would not miss the challenges it posed. "It will be good to say good-bye to all of the things that are wrong at school" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). Her life as a teacher was influenced by challenges at school and she spoke of their effects on her. "When you teach, your life goes on hold and you give up a lot. Teaching is so intense and you have to hold it all together" (Conversation, January 31, 2001).

Challenges appeared to be part of life at school and came from different places on the school landscape. Some came from the classroom while more came from "outside the classroom" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) and from the people who made decisions about students and teachers. The following sections describe these challenges.

Demands and Change Inside the Classroom

Noreen acknowledged some concern about the "classroom situation" (Conversation, June 23, 2001) and the challenges presented. Demands inside the classroom were often phrased in the context of how teaching had changed.

> The classroom situation has really changed and kids have changed. Colleagues who teach high school have told me how hard they struggle to get kids to do anything. I am also dealing with the lack of willingness of some kids in grade one. But, we are expected to teach even when kids won't engage. Teachers are so busy with kids who have behavior problems that it is hard to find the time to teach. I was visiting with my teacher friends last night and I could not believe how the talk went. One teacher talked about not taking a field trip this year. Although she feels bad for the kids who behave, she will not risk taking the whole class because so many of the students behave badly. I remember when we would take the whole school to the circus on a Saturday and have just a great time. But, times have really changed. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

Demands and Change Outside of the Classroom

Although Noreen voiced some frustration over problems that originated in the classroom, it was challenge from "outside the classroom" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) that posed the greatest concern. Challenge from outside the classroom was also described in the context of how teaching had changed but was presented as being more extensive and varied than classroom demands. "You do a tight rope balancing act when you get caught up in all of the things that teachers must deal with outside the classroom" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). Demands from outside of the classroom will be discussed in relation to one another, in ways Noreen identified them.

> Teaching has changed. At one time, I liked doing report cards. I could just sit and write and parents knew exactly how their child was doing. Now, they are horrendous things and I get so stressed out about them. You have to be so careful how you word things or parents take exception. But, if you don't spell it out, you are doing the next teacher a disservice. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> Teachers are taking on more and more and it is just exhausting. We are caught up in too many demands. When I come in on Monday morning and have a blank slate, it quickly starts to fill up. All of the extras are killing teachers. The needs of kids gets higher and higher each year. And, we are constantly parenting. Mothers used to have the time to read with their children but, not anymore. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

Included in the naming of challenges that originated from outside of the classroom was the identification of their source.

> I remember when teachers used to get together for grade level meetings and share ideas to use in the classroom. But now, with all of the new projects being initiated, we are being told how to teach and the money is going to the new projects instead of to the kids. There are more people in administrative positions and that has really had an impact on programming. Money-men are making decisions about programming. The last couple of years, money has been available to schools but why are we still having to sell chocolate bars? We are losing out because the money-men at the top are making decisions that affect us all. There are so many political issues in teaching. I really think that public education is in crisis. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

Noreen shared her concerns about the impact that challenges from outside the classroom were having on her life.

> Teaching is darn hard work. When I get home from school and if there is any music playing, I don't want to hear a sound. After I've been buzzed all day, I don't want any more stimulation. I can handle the paper work but that's about all. I'm in bed by nine o'clock just so I can handle the next day. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> Teaching hasn't gotten easier. You would think that after thirty-one years of teaching that I wouldn't have to go back to school at night to work but I do and I'm working as hard as ever. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

She was also concerned about the competitive influence of challenges from outside of the classroom on colleagues.

> Education has become the flavor of the month. So many teachers just jump on it. I don't really blame them because they feel intimidated. We have gotten away from teaching and instead try to compete with each other. We need to just teach. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Challenges at school caused Noreen to think not only of what had been but also about the future of teaching.

> I went for a walk at noon and thought about what will happen next year to the children I am teaching. What will happen to them when they are not given the help that they need? Even with an assistant in my classroom this year, it has been a struggle. But what is going to happen when the extra help is not available? How can one teacher possibly do it all?
>
> Even though there is relief in knowing that I won't have to deal with all of the problems at school when I retire, I still worry about kids. When they come and tell you that their mother is in the hospital or that they had to move because there is a new uncle living with them, I really worry about those poor little kids. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

Thoughts of the future of education and teaching included her colleagues and their future. Not only was she concerned about "young teachers because the demands are so great" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) but she was also disturbed that "lots of older teachers are retiring younger and earlier than they used to" (Conversation, June 1, 2001).

> It's exciting to see new teachers coming into the profession but they are so discouraged by all of the stress. I know that I still get discouraged when a parent makes a comment about something they don't like. That kind of thing is really hard on new teachers. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> Some are angry and not willing to stay. We have lost a lot of teachers because they were angry. And, if teachers leave feeling hurt, they will not go back into teaching. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

As she voiced concern about the future of education, she offered her own solution. Part of the solution was to "stay in my own room and away from the politics" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). Another solution was to allow new administrators "the freedom to fly" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). She explained.

> I really believe that when someone is new to administration and is willing to listen to teachers, they need to be given the freedom to fly. Older teachers can take them under their wings and support their new ideas. Let them handle situations but also give them support. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

The Decision to Retire

Noreen's decision to retire was influenced by demands inside and outside of the classroom. She was convinced that "when you can see the games being played, you can separate yourself from them and move on" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). The decision to move on and retire from teaching was confirmed when she said, "Retirement just constantly feels right and I'm comfortable knowing that I'm retiring" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). In addition to feeling like she had made the right decision to retire, she identified the relief involved. "When I decided to retire, it was like a release and the stress just floated away like a cloud" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). "The time is just

right for me and it really helps to make that decision final" (Conversation, June 23, 2001).

She acknowledged the importance of being able to have choice in the decision to retire and appreciated being able to have choice in the time of her leaving. "I've been lucky because I feel that it is my choice to leave. No one is forcing me out" (Conversation, January 31, 2001).

> I know others who did not retire when they wanted to and felt forced to leave. A friend of mine was told before he retired that he wasn't a team player. Those kinds of slammers at the end of your career really hurt. You give your body and soul to teaching and when someone tells you something like that, it really hurts. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

In spite of having choice in when to retire, she indicated that the decision is not an easy one to make because "teaching is our identity" (Conversation, June 1, 2001).

> Teaching is our identity and when you quit, it is really hard to figure out who you are. It parallels closely to kids that come from a small high school and they think that they are big wigs with their pick-up trucks and because their parents are so and so in the community. Then, when they leave to live somewhere else, they find out that they are small fish. Some of them can't cope because they no longer have the recognition they once enjoyed. The same thing could be true for teachers and administrators. When administrators have been in the limelight and then retire to become just Joe Blow, that could cause problems. If you are not comfortable with yourself, there could be problems. I procrastinated about phoning the employer because I knew that once I did, I couldn't turn back. You have to be pretty sure that you really want to go through it. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Not only was her decision to retire influenced by freedom of choice in her leaving but she also had a plan for the future. Noreen emphasized the importance of having a plan or "something else to do" (Conversation, June 1, 2001).

> I have some things in place and I think it is important to have that. If I were to give any advice, I would suggest that people have some plans in place. Too many teachers don't keep up their friendships because their whole world has revolved around school. I think it is a big wakeup call when they retire if they haven't kept in contact with friends. For some teachers it is probably a very hard decision to make if they don't have something else to do. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

In addition to choice in leaving and having a plan for retirement, Noreen's decision to retire involved a "letting go." She began to let go of commitments at school and saw humor in excluding herself from conversations over decisions for the coming year. "I had to laugh during morning briefing when people were going on about whether to sell chocolate bars next year. The secretary noticed that while everyone was siding with one decision or the other, I just smiled" (Conversation, March 28, 2001).

Her decision to retire was accompanied by her willingness to "let go" of teaching materials she had collected throughout her career. She would keep things she cherished like "the bibles that work" (Conversation, June 1, 2001) but was more than ready to see most of her teaching materials disappear.

> I'm having a garage sale on Saturday and I'm going to sell it all. I've been packing boxes and am ready to get rid of it. I've given and given and given things away and now I'm going to sell the rest. I packed boxes during spring break and they are going in the sale because I'm not packing them into my basement. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

Noreen Tells a Story of the Future, A Story of Retirement

Noreen's decision to retire was influenced by demands she faced at school. In spite of challenges the school landscape presented, she would miss the rewards teaching had to offer. Consequently, she made plans to connect back to teaching and confirmed her intention to implement her plan each time we met.

> I don't think that I'll really give up teaching. I've got too much energy. I'll probably take a month to just do nothing but then I will do other things. There are advertisements for people to teach English to new immigrants. I've got all this knowledge so why not give back at this time. I've got these good years and I could volunteer in a school. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> I know I'll always want to be connected to teaching because I love my teaching career. I don't know if I'll go in as a volunteer or do some subbing or just what I'm going to do but I will connect to school. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> I would like to tutor kids when I retire, just so I can help them. It is so exciting to watch kids learn. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

> I am planning to help a teacher set up a reading program for students who struggle. I feel so strongly about helping kids learn to read. I am giving one day a week and will spend one whole week helping to do preliminary testing. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

> I know that I will definitely still want to do some educational related activities. I am sending for an application form to become a regional university facilitator for student teachers. I have a life-long interest in education and how it is delivered. I plan to stay involved. (Reflections, June 30, 2001)

Plans to maintain a connection to teaching included visiting colleagues and schools when on vacation in other countries and investigating the possibility of becoming a substitute teacher. Substitute teaching appealed to her because she would "not have to go to staff meetings, do report cards or attend all the other meetings teachers go to." "There is no stress in substituting because you walk out the door at the end of the day" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). Substitute teaching would also provide her with an opportunity to connect to colleagues. "When I thought about all of the teachers I know in the schools I have taught in, I knew I would be able to see them" (Conversation, March 28, 2001).

Opportunities to connect with colleagues enhanced the appeal of maintaining a connection to school while opportunities to connect with children enhanced the appeal of returning to the classroom. Her intention to maintain a connection to the classroom came from her desire to connect with children. She saw confirmation of the rewards that stepping back onto the school landscape provided other retired teachers who continued to volunteer at school.

> I know other retired teachers who give time to children in schools. The impact they have on the lives of children is amazing. One retired teacher gave three days a week to a girl in my class so she would learn to read. I see great potential in being able to return to school to help. Retired teachers have the time to do this. The reality is that kids are not reading at home and they need someone to listen to them. Sometimes, there is something that gets in the way of a child's success in reading and all they need is a little help to get them going and to experience success. (Conversation, June 23, 2001)

Talk of connecting back to school and teaching indicated that she planned to stay involved. However, she also planned to safe-guard time to do other things. Planned activities outside of school included participation in a book club she started the year before, playing golf and bridge, walking and exercising. She also planned to continue her involvement in hosting exchange students in her home and looked forward to a busy summer entertaining guests from out of the country. "I'm going to be busy this summer and I just love it" (Conversation, March 28, 2001).

In addition to established plans for the future, she intended to initiate new projects. "Now that I'm close to retirement, I've been creatively planning" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). Creative plans included becoming a volunteer at a museum, starting a retired teachers group, participating in a mentorship program and taking a trip to Japan with another retired teacher in the spring. Noreen was excited about her plans for the future. "There's another life out there and I'm not afraid of it" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). "These plans are really exciting" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). She also found humor in how others viewed her retirement and the extent of her planning. "I had to laugh because when I emailed my sons the other day, one of them asked if I was retiring or not" (Conversation, June 23, 2001).

As she storied herself into the future and made plans for retirement, she confirmed the existence of established priorities. Some priorities related to her life away from teaching while others connected to her life as a teacher and her experience in living the story of teaching.

> Maintaining contact with friends is a priority for me and I've tried throughout the years to do that. If you don't, what do you do when you retire? Life goes on and everybody moves on. They become involved in different groups and you could find yourself not involved. (Conversation, January 31, 2001)

> You can't all of a sudden retire and say, "Hey world, I'm retired." I think that if a teacher doesn't have something planned for retirement, they are going to have a heck of a time with it. You have to be prepared and have an interest. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> I'm really interested in doing something about the situation in education. I don't know if it will be through political action but, I want to get on some committees and get to the grass roots of problems in education. I'm going to talk to my MLA about why money isn't getting to kids in classrooms. Not having enough assistants in classrooms and getting kids into classrooms that suit their learning needs are issues that need to be looked at. Parents are not doing it, so teachers have to. (Conversation, June 1, 2001)

Her story of the future contained a number of set plans that would consume hours in her day. In addition to activities that required structured time, Noreen planned to leave some unstructured time available. Unstructured time would permit her to take care of her own needs and interests. One need she often commented on was the importance of maintaining good health. She was aware that good health in retirement is not always guaranteed.

> When I think back, a big turning point for me was hearing the statistics of how long teachers live after retiring from teaching. I could have waited another five years until I turned sixty-five but who knows. (Conversation, January 31, 2001).

> When you think about retiring, often your health dictates how things will go. You don't always know what is around the corner. (Conversation, March 28, 2001)

> I was in a car accident on Wednesday, just a day before the last day of school. It made me realize how tenuous life is. I really want to get out and do things while I am still healthy and before I leave this planet. (Conversation, June 30, 2001)

Noreen looked to the future with excitement for what it had to offer. Retirement would offer a "different frame of mind" (Conversation, March 28, 2001) and time to reflect.

> Retirement is a time to reflect and to look over my life. I've already started to think back on my life as a student and teacher and have noticed some interesting things. I have learned to teach from children and I'm grateful for what they have taught me. I will take my memories with me and I look forward to making new ones. (Conversation, May 11, 2001)

> I woke up today with a smile on my face and anxious to get on with the next stage of my life, my retirement. (Reflections, June 30, 2001)

Living Into Retirement

The Summer

Conversations with Noreen during the summer revealed her reflective thoughts of the past along with encouraging and hopeful thoughts about the present and the future. Her thoughts included concern over changes in teaching and the increase of stress at school, a concern she voiced often in pre-retirement conversations.

> Education was valued in our home but it is quite different today. When I first went into teaching, I was respected for being a teacher. Then about twenty years ago, things started to change. I remember talking with colleagues about how parents were spoiling their kids and administrators were not backing teachers. It's hard to believe that it began twenty years ago. That's a long time to live with stress in your life. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

Although she was no longer directly involved in the stress of teaching, she acknowledged colleagues who would return to the classroom in the fall and continue to live with stressful demands.

> My teacher friends have already been to the teachers' store and I don't know of one who hasn't been back into the classroom this summer. They went back to school the last week of July to clean and sort things out for this coming year. They have also been on the computer looking for new things to use in teaching. No one knows the amount of work they put in. Teaching doesn't leave you alone even when you are on summer holidays. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

In contrast to concerns about teaching friends who returned to the classroom over the summer to prepare for the next year, she spoke of how different her life was in retirement.

> Now things are different for me. Every other summer I would have to plan things so that I could get all of the things done that I wanted to do. Every minute was accounted for. By this time, I would have played as many games of bridge as I could just to get them in. But this summer I'm not feeling pressured. I can read books and know that what gets done gets done and that's it. It's a really great feeling to know I now have choice. When you are teaching, you don't have choice. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

Noreen was excited about being retired. With some plans in place and unstructured time set aside, she looked to the future with enthusiasm. Her hopeful view of the future came from a theory she had about life.

> I have a theory about life. I have arthritis in my knees and it is not going to get any better. So I have to do things while I feel well enough to do them. Time is a precious commodity for me, so I'll just make the best of it and keep going. Life is attitude. You have to get out there and do things while you are still healthy enough to do them. That is a high priority for me. And, I have tried to maintain balance in life but, I'm sure that there are many teachers who don't do that. When they get to retirement, they are just lost. They gave everything they had to teaching. You can't do that and maintain any quality of life. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

Plans shared in pre-retirement conversations were set into action during the summer. In addition to entertaining exchange students, playing golf and attending her book club, she initiated the formation of a retired teachers' group. She also shared her excitement about volunteering at school in the fall.

> I've looked at a calendar to see when I will be able to start because I really want to get started. I'm just really excited about going to school to help. I have some exciting resources to share. I've kept my reading material so I can help children learn to read. I want to be able to do that. That is where my passion is. I've taught for thirty-one years because I believed in teaching. If you believe in something, you have a different attitude. And age has nothing to do with it. I was the oldest teacher on staff but I felt that I was one of the most enthusiastic. I worked hard and made a commitment to teaching and I want to stay connected. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

Enthusiasm over being retired was shared in our summer conversation when she said, "I'm a retired teacher and I'm celebrating my retirement" (Conversation, August 8, 2001). Her enthusiasm came from having the "right attitude" about the future, her future in retirement.

> It is time to move on to the future. I am not going to use teaching as a crutch and spend a lot of time looking back on what was. Some people don't think that they should try new things when they get to a certain age but I think I still can. You just have to have the right attitude. Life experience has taught me a lot and I've been able to sift out a lot of chaff. I know what to overlook and what not to get stressed out about because I know that it is going to pass. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

As Noreen celebrated her retirement, she was aware also of retirement realities that could pose a different story. One challenge that appeared in conversation during the summer was the change in her income and although she acknowledged "how much less income" (Conversation, August 8, 2001) she was receiving, she was more concerned over maintaining good health.

> What is more important to me is my health. That is a much bigger concern. Maybe I should be more concerned about the financial aspects of retirement but I want to see Hong Kong and other places while I am still able to travel. (Conversation, August 8, 2001)

The Fall

Noreen indicated that her life changed somewhat during the summer but recognition of noticeable change in the way her life had been as a teacher and the story she was living in retirement occurred in the fall. As she described her retirement experience, she often spoke of change in her life in terms of contrasts just as she had done previously in describing pre-retirement experience.

Summer and Fall Differ

The summer following Noreen's retirement passed quickly, as she maintained a hectic schedule of events. "The summer was kind of unrealistic and time just flew" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). The month of September brought a significant change to her hectic schedule and, although she continued to be involved in planned activities, she was no longer part of "what September brings at school" (Conversation, September 7, 2001).

> I didn't realize that I was off the treadmill until after the summer passed. I had lunch with two retired teachers the other day and they both said that they didn't miss the treadmill of what September brings at school. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

Structured and Unstructured Time Differ

Noreen described time in terms of its structure. Structured time was associated with teaching and time restrictions while unstructured time was associated with unlimited time in retirement. Structured time in teaching left little time for other things while unstructured time in retirement offered time to pursue other interests. She described the difference and her preference.

> I really like my unstructured time. Even though I am busy, I know that my time is my own. I have choice in how to spend it. I plan in advance so that I know what I'm doing tomorrow, next week and so on, but the difference is that I can choose to do certain things or not. I am busy but I have choice in what I do and how busy I want to be. Before I retired, I didn't have choice in how to spend my time. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

> I'm not worried about not teaching and having too much free time now that I'm retired because I know I will keep busy. I will continue to organize and keep busy doing things that I feel have a purpose in my life. But I love the idea that if I don't feel like doing something one day, I can put it off and do it another day. If something comes up that I would rather do, I can. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Unstructured time in retirement allowed her "time to decide what it is that I want to do in retirement. You have the time to make choices about what is important to you personally" (Conversation, October 1, 2001).

> Even thought I am still not quite in the mode of putting things off completely, like when I still get up at five o'clock in the morning, there is a difference. The difference is that I am more relaxed and am taking more time to nurture myself. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

> Since I've been home from holidays, I realize how great it is to have the time to do the things that are important to me. On Monday, for example, I took a friend for treatment. Before I retired, I would have done things to help her out but I didn't have the time to spend with her personally. It is a plus that I can do that now and it is a pretty nice thought to know that I have the time to share with her. (Conversation, December 13, 2001)

A Change in Ownership

When Noreen taught, she was very involved in organizing events at school. Shared reflections of the past revealed her commitment to being an organizer. "I take

charge when there is a need to have something done. I don't wait for others to do it, I just go ahead and do it. I'm an organizer and I just jump in with both feet when there is a need. I don't sit back, I act" (Conversation, October 1, 2001).

> Throughout my career, I have been involved in organizing and taking charge. Like starting the Kindergarten program in one school and a grandparents program in another. I organized ways to get people from the community to share their expertise. When I look back at all of the things that were organized at school that the staff enjoyed, they were things I organized. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

After she retired, her commitment to being an "organizer" changed. "When I taught, I assumed a lot of responsibility for getting things organized and done. But now, I no longer have to take ownership for everything that is going on at school" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She would continue to organize activities for others but the focus of that involvement and the extent to which she would be involved changed.

> I organized a meeting for retired teachers to get together and I didn't mind getting the first meeting going but, I'm not going to do it all myself. If they want to continue to have meetings and speakers, they are going to have to help. I don't have to take it on myself. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

Teaching and Volunteering Differ

Noreen understood from experience "the stress that teaching brings" (Conversation, September 7, 2001) and how that stress intensified over her career. Stress in teaching influenced her decision to retire. "Teaching takes so much energy that I just knew I didn't want to do it anymore and that I needed to leave" (Conversation, September 7, 2001).

> The role of the teacher has changed. Over my career, there has been change in the way I have been valued as a teacher. It has decreased each year. Teachers now have more expectations placed on them. One of the reasons I was tired at the end was because of the constant demands put on me at school. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Confirmation of the existence and influence of stress did not, however, diminish her passion for teaching. "Teaching was a passion and continues to be" (Conversation,

September 7, 2001). Consequently, she intended to maintain a connection to school and teaching but in a changed way. Instead of having little or no choice, she would have complete choice in when and how to connect to school.

> What's so interesting is that I am still connected to school. I'm doing volunteer work with a teacher for the next two weeks and I'll be in the school every day of the week except Thursday and Friday. So, I guess I haven't given it up. But, it's different. I can pick and choose when I want to be there and go to places I know I can make a difference. I want to stay involved because I care about kids and I know that so many of them need extra help. I still feel like I'm offering support to kids when I volunteer. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

Volunteering at school brought renewed excitement and commitment. She was willing to return to school as a volunteer teacher because "teaching is a cause I believe in" (Conversation, September 7, 2001).

> I was excited about teaching throughout my career because there is great excitement in learning and the determination to make learning meaningful. Very often, I felt as though I wasn't a teacher but a facilitator. I believe in child power and letting them go ahead and do things. I didn't have to be in control at the front of the room. I found that they were often better teachers with their classmates than I was. I guess the teacher part is still with me and it always will be. I still find myself walking around stores thinking about things I see and about how neat something would be in the classroom.
>
> My most important emphasis was always on reading and that is a love that has carried over to retirement. I will continue to make a connection to school in the reading program. That is keeping me going because I love the feedback from kids. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Volunteering at school not only provided Noreen with an opportunity to teach reading, but connecting back to the school landscape allowed her to continue to develop relationships with students.

> When they meet me in the halls and want to share their stories, I can be their friend. I want to continue to be the important person who takes an interest in how they are and what they are doing. That is a wonderful feeling. To take the time for children is what teaching is all about.... I know that when I was teaching, I didn't have the time to really listen to children and their stories. So, this is my time to do that. I will continue to be there to listen to their stories and to take pressure off teachers.

> A teacher is often the constant in a young person's life. I know that I have made a difference in childrens' lives by being an advocate for them. I've brought in lunch when they weren't getting a lunch from home. I cared for them, gave them hugs and was there for them. I've been a strict teacher but always a fair teacher who cared about kids. And they know when you care about them. Children respond to that and so I will continue to show kids that I care about them. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Some Priorities Stay the Same, Others Change

Setting priorities was not a new exercise for Noreen. As she spoke of what was important in her life, she indicated that some pre-established priorities would continue to be part of her life in retirement. She would continue to volunteer, mentor, get exercise, play bridge and read books to share at book club meetings. One priority that would continue to stand out as most important was her connection with people. Maintaining contact and providing care for family and friends was a priority that would not change. The reason she chose to attach great importance to this "goal" came from past experience.

> I remember being at a meeting some twenty years ago and hearing someone speak of the importance of doing something for someone everyday. I thought that that was a good way to live and I have tried to maintain that goal. If I can do something for somebody else, my life is better. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

Descriptions of various relationships she had with others clearly indicated the continued importance of people in her life after she retired. Helping others continued to be part of Noreen's story to live by.

> Young people are really important to me. I try to maintain contact with students I've taught and like to help them when they are dealing with problems. It is a priority for me. I have always tried to help young teachers and those that I have had an affiliation with in the past continue to maintain contact with me. I've always made a point of sharing my stuff with new teachers and they are still my friends.... And I have always been an advocate for underdogs and sometimes teachers need someone to speak up for them because they won't speak up for themselves. Now that I'm retired, I don't have to speak up for people. But, if I feel strongly about how someone is being treated, I will speak up for them. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

> I like to help others. I have a friend who needed to get out and so I got her involved in the reading program at the school because I knew it would be good for her. I knew she needed to get out of her house. Something that I think would be good for me is helping others in palliative care or people with AIDS. I'd like to do something beyond what I have already done to help others. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

The strength of her priority to connect to, and help, others came to the fore when a close friend became ill.

> My friend is critically ill and seeing her makes me think about how precious life is and how I need to pay attention to priorities. My priority right now is her. (Conversation, December 13, 2001)

Although Noreen continued to maintain certain priorities she established before she retired, she also spoke of how her priorities changed after she retired. She continued to devote time to others but also focused on taking time for herself.

> My priorities are different. I think that as you get older, your sense of spirituality and your mortality becomes more of a reality. I want to do certain things and as many things as I can while I still have my health. So, I build time in for myself. I go to the gym and I walk for an hour each day. It is so important to take care of your health. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

> When I was asked to do professional development workshops for teachers this fall, I said no because I like to be with children. I don't want to do workshops for teachers. I've done it, been a lead teacher.... It is time to move on and let other people at school pick up the torch.

> Doing things for others is a constant in my life but I would also like to audit courses at the university and learn more about the world. When I get back from Australia, I might go on a reading sabbatical because I have so many books to read and the gift certificates from bookstores just continue to grow. I hope to find balance in doing things for others, volunteering and things for me. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Retirement Reflections—Challenges and Opportunities

Conversations with Noreen after she retired revealed how retirement posed a different context for living. Challenges appeared in retirement and she acknowledged their impact when she said, "retirement is not a magical time" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). In spite of challenges presented to her by retirement, Noreen chose to view them as opportunities she could learn from.

> I guess that when you retire, you go through a time when you are trying to figure out who you are. Like after my divorce, I went through a time when I asked myself who I was. There are new beginnings and I think retirement is another new beginning, like the new beginning I had after my divorce. I think my life is like chapters of new beginnings. I also believe that you create your own life. If you want to be active and have a healthy retirement, you can choose that. Life is made up of choices. I could choose to get out and be involved or I could sit at home and feel sorry for myself. I could sit at home reading the paper or I can get out and get involved with people or do things for children. And, it isn't that I don't have down days. I do have down days where I do nothing. Just have a couch potato day. But, I see those days as times to nurture myself. Life is attitude and I try to have a positive attitude towards others. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

When faced with the challenge of a reduced income, she continued to view the challenge as change she could live with.

> My life is not going to change significantly by a reduction in income because of how I accept that reduction. There is more strength in character in having to live with less and I am prepared to do that. It comes from times when I had less. When you don't have much money, you decide what is important and where that money should be spent. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

She explained that the reason she was able to view this challenge in a positive way was because she had planned for retirement.

> I've had to plan for retirement. I had to raise three kids on my own and I've been a single mom for a long time. I had to sit down with a financial planner and figure things out so that I would have enough money in retirement. I also knew that I would probably spend about two-thirds of my retirement money in the first third of my retirement period but that I would not be spending money in the same way I did when I taught. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

> You have to be a good manager of money before you retire. So, I was careful to make sure that I saved for retirement. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Noreen indicated how "circumstances at school before you retire have an impact on your retirement" and that having a choice in when to retire is "equally important" (Conversation, September 7, 2001).

> I think that the circumstances at school before you retire have an impact on your retirement. But equally important is that you have to choose the right time to retire. Philosophical or health related issues may interfere

> with continuing, so you have to try to plan when to leave. Certainly, it is the best if you have choice in when you leave. I know that not everyone is able to leave when they would like to. Financial matters get in the way and really can have an impact on whether you can afford to retire or not. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

Retirement did pose challenges, challenges Noreen endeavored to view in a positive way. She explained that the reason she was able to maintain a positive outlook towards challenge in retirement came from the Serenity Prayer.

> I've used the Serenity Prayer in my teaching. It came to me about ten years ago when I was experiencing difficulties with the administration in my school. I've kept a copy of it because it is such an important message. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

In addition to challenges posed by retirement and her willingness to view challenges as opportunities to learn from, retirement did offer Noreen a feeling of "calmness" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). It also provided her with "a wonderful opportunity to find yourself again" (Conversation, October 1, 2001).

> Now I can say I'm a retired teacher and I like the feeling it brings. I find that there is more serenity with me and that feels good. There is calmness because I don't have to do certain things at school anymore and I feel very comfortable with letting that go. (Conversation, September 7, 2001)

> I see retirement as a time of broadening out, an opportunity to gain balance in life. So, this is a good stage of life for me. When I was in my career, I didn't have time to reflect and decide what was important. But now, I have been given that opportunity.
>
> And now that I'm sixty years old, I feel that I'm entitled to have a little time to do some things that I want to do. I love being able to do what I like and to have the choice. The biggest opportunity for me in retirement is the ability to make choices. I have a choice in what it is that I am going to do. When you are teaching you don't have many choices. But when you retire, you have choice.
>
> Retirement is a wonderful opportunity to find yourself again. It gives you a chance to find out who you really are and what it is that you want to do. In the hustle of a career, you tend to lose your identity. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Noreen gave credit to her teaching experience when she retired and considered her past experience in the classroom a "gift" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). She began

to use her knowledge of teaching when school started in the fall and planned to continue to employ her teacher knowledge in the future.

> Truthfully, when I look back, I didn't know what skills I had as a teacher. Teaching broadens us and prepares us for so many things. I didn't realize what the gift of teaching gives. (Conversation, October 1, 2001)

Living Into the Future

Reflective thoughts were part of conversations before Noreen took her vacation and continued to be spoken after she returned home. She confirmed the existence of stress in teaching and that "when we teach, we are just trying to tread water" (Conversation, December 13, 2001). She also spoke, however, of the opportunities teaching provides. "In spite of all the stress, when I reflect back on what teaching was like for me, I realize how lucky I was" (Conversation, December 13, 2001). As she reflected on her past, she also confirmed her hopes for the future.

> I am very settled with being retired. There are so many interesting things to do and I want to do them all. I'm still at the crossroads, but retirement is a nice time to pick and choose. It is a time to sort the wheat from the chaff. (Conversation, December 13, 2001)

Six months after Noreen retired, she indicated how "the time has gone so fast. I can hardly believe that I have been retired for six months" (Conversation, January 10, 2002). During our conversation, she continued to speak enthusiastically about plans and hopes for the future. Plans included those she had started and others she envisioned. She would take a trip to Japan, see the assistant superintendent about being hired as a substitute teacher and would continue to volunteer at school. In addition to established plans, she spoke of new plans for the future. One such plan was to become involved in a retired teachers' group at the provincial level. As she described this new plan, it became clear that her enthusiasm over being retired came from hopeful thoughts of the future.

> I organized a meeting today with the retired teachers and there were about thirty-six retired teachers in attendance. I chaired the meeting and asked if each person would talk about what they are doing in their retirement. It was so interesting to find out that so many of them are still connected to

> teaching. A friend of mine who is involved in a new program to mentor young teachers asked the group if anyone was interested in volunteering for the program. She must have had ten or fifteen retired teachers volunteer to become involved in mentoring. What an exciting project for the future. (Conversation, January 10, 2002)

New plans for the future involved a continued commitment to others. She planned to submit an article to the ATA News and to design an etched window to be placed in a church in honor of a colleague who recently passed away. She was planning a surprise birthday party for a friend and described with excitement how the plan would unfold. Excitement and hope continued to be part of her conversations as she looked forward to the future.

Almost a Year Later

Fortunately, I was able to maintain contact with Noreen throughout her first year of retirement. During a conversation in May 2002, she shared her thoughts about what the year had been like.

> I cannot believe a whole year has gone by so quickly. I was busy traveling for three months and then the volunteer work has really kept me busy. It was a very good year to be out of teaching given all of the stress that teachers have had to deal with. It reaffirms what I told you a year ago about public education and how it is in crisis.
>
> Retiring was the right move for me to make and I have no regrets. I've maintained contact with school and have the retired teachers' group organized and incorporated. I have time to spend with friends and family and my life is full of things that I choose to do. I'm a retired teacher and truly enjoy my retirement. (Conversation, May 23, 2002)

Retelling Noreen's Shifting Story to Live By

"Once a Teacher, Always a Teacher"

From the time Noreen was a child, she knew she wanted to teach. Her story of teaching formally began many years later but even as a young child, she occupied hours in her day playing school and "being a teacher" (January, 2001). Her mother and many of her father's family taught school and she grew up knowing the value of education and the importance of teaching from conversations her parents had, conversations that indicated

their respect for the profession. She contemplated becoming a nurse and to eventually teach in the nursing profession but her career as a nurse "was over" within a few days of entering the facility. "I thought I would like teaching nursing but, I knew that teaching school was really what I wanted to do, so I switched over to education" (January, 2001). Her story to live by as schoolteacher continued to unfold.

As our conversations began, she spoke of past and present teaching experiences. Her stories indicated the influence of teaching in her life. She recalled her first year at school and the "great year" (January, 2001) she had with students and colleagues. She described how she continued to teach when she was at home raising a family and the feeling that the first day of school brought when she did not return to the classroom. "It would just grab me to know that I was not going back" (March, 2001). Even after thirty-one years of teaching, she explained the importance of teaching in her life when she said, "once a teacher, always a teacher" (January, 2001).

Noreen's story to live by told of experiences at school that were both rewarding and challenging. Rewards and challenges appeared in her story of teaching, but in spite of their opposing pulls, she tried to maintain a balance between the two. She acknowledged challenges in teaching, but in search for balance was able to enjoy many rewards and to leave the profession "still loving teaching" (January, 2001).

"I Feel Good About My Years in Teaching"

As she reflected on years past and the events of the last six months of her career, she acknowledged what teaching meant to her and the rewards it presented. Relationships she shared with students, parents and colleagues were held in high regard. She spoke of how "fortunate" she was "because children give hugs" (June, 2001). She appreciated relationships she shared with colleagues and was willing to extend herself to other teachers because she recognized the value of maintaining a caring relationship with them. In addition to rewards in teaching that came from relationships shared with others, she recognized the value of providing a positive learning environment for children.

Opportunities to share her teacher knowledge in the classroom brought feelings of satisfaction. She recalled how she knew "intuitively what worked with kids and what needed to be taught" (January, 2001). In spite of working through preparation periods and recess breaks to help students who struggled, she acknowledged the satisfaction that came with their success. Positive experiences at school encouraged her to provide meaningful experiences for students right up to the day she left teaching to retire. She explained her outlook. "I feel good about my years in teaching" (January, 2001).

> I'm having so much fun teaching this year that when somebody asked me how many days were left until the end, I didn't know because I don't think about my teaching that way. It's a really nice way to leave. (March, 2001)

Personal satisfaction with teaching was a significant part of her story to live by. The satisfaction and appreciation shown by others for the influence she had on their lives added to her story. During the last months of her teaching career, retirement celebrations were held in her honor.

> From the year-end cards and letters I received, I feel like I have made a difference in the communities I taught in. I have been made to feel like I made a difference in the lives of some children and that makes me feel good. (Conversation, June 30, 2001)

"When You Teach, Your Life Goes on Hold"

Although Noreen acknowledged the rewards of teaching and spoke of how she would miss positive experiences at school when she retired, she also indicated that she would not miss experiences that challenged. Stories of challenge came from different places at school. Some challenges originated from inside the classroom but greater challenges were posed from outside the classroom. As challenges from inside the classroom combined with problems situated outside of the classroom, they had a definite impact on her story to live by. She spoke of the impact challenge at school was having on her life. "I'm in bed by nine o'clock just so I can handle the next day" (March, 2001). "You would think that after thirty-one years of teaching that I wouldn't have to go back to school at night to work, but I do and I'm working as hard as ever" (June, 2001).

Her story to live by as teacher was also influenced by concerns she had for others who would stay behind as she moved off the school landscape into retirement. She worried about teacher voice not being heard, young teachers leaving the profession in search of a new career and older teachers retiring early because of hurt and angry feelings over challenge at school. Most of all, she was anxious about children and how they would cope in the future. "What is going to happen when the extra help is not available for kids who need it? How can one teacher possibly do it all" (March, 2001)? Noreen's story to live by as teacher was continually challenged by demands at school.

"Retirement Just Constantly Feels Right"

In response to challenge at school, Noreen decided to retire. She indicated how she felt about the decision when she said, "retirement just constantly feels right and I'm comfortable knowing that I'm retiring" (June, 2001). In light of the experiences of other teachers she knew, who were pressured to retire, she appreciated having choice in retirement timing. Her story to live by continued to be composed but began to change when her decision to retire brought relief. "When I decided, it was like a release and the stress just floated away like a cloud" (January, 2001).

"Teaching is Our Identity"

Although Noreen was determined in her decision to retire, she procrastinated about informing her employer because "you have to be pretty sure that you really want to go through with it" (June, 2001). Part of the reason for the delay came from knowing that her identity as a teacher would change. Speaking for a collective, she explained. "Teaching is our identity and when you quit, it is really hard to figure out who you are" (June, 2001). Teaching was a significant part of her story to live by and she recognized how difficult it would be to figure out who she was when she was no longer a teacher.

"Now That I'm Close to Retirement, I've Been Creatively Planning"

Before Noreen retired, she storied herself into the future. She indicated that she would not miss the challenges presented by different places on the school landscape but

would miss teaching. In response to this loss, she spoke often about plans to stay connected to teaching. "I know I'll always want to be connected to teaching because I love my teaching" (March, 2001). Noreen's story to live by in retirement would connect to the story she lived before she retired as she planned ways to facilitate that connection.

Her story to live by continued to be composed. Not only did she plan to stay connected to teaching when she retired, she planned to participate in a variety of activities she started before she retired. Activities including book club meetings, golf, bridge games, exercising and having exchange students stay with her were established during pre-retirement time with the intent that they would continue on when she retired. She also planned to initiate new activities. A trip to Australia was scheduled for the fall as well as the formation of a retired teachers' group. Other plans were not as definite but offered interesting prospects. They included investigating the possibility of becoming a regional university facilitator for student teachers, finding out what was available and interesting to do at a museum and visiting her sons in Japan. As her story to live by continued to be composed, she indicated how plans for the future would ensure a connection between the story she lived before she retired and the story she would live after she retired.

Having a plan for retirement was an intentional act that assisted in identifying and confirming priorities in her life. One established priority she valued and would continue to attend to involved maintaining a connection to friends. Her story to live by told of the importance of others in her life. Another priority she set for retirement was to take care of her health. She knew from experience how one's state of health could change. "When I think back, a big turning point was when I heard the statistics about how long teachers live after they retire. I could have waited another five years until I turned sixty-five but, who knows" (January, 2001). "When you think about retiring, your health often dictates how things will go. You don't always know what is around the corner" (March 28, 2001). Her story to live by told of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle in retirement.

"I'll Take My Memories and I Look Forward to Making New Ones"

As Noreen storied herself into the future, she recalled the past. A reflective glance provided her with memories of her life as a student and a teacher. Treasured memories of the past were embedded in her story to live by. She valued opportunities to reflect on her life as a teacher and looked forward to retirement and its offer of a "different frame of mind and a time to reflect" (March, 2001). On the last day of school she spoke of her life as a teacher and concluded with a look to the future. "I woke up with a smile on my face and I'm anxious to get on with the next stage of life, my retirement" (June, 2001). Her story to live by continued to unfold as she took positive memories from the past and combined them with hopeful thoughts for the future.

"I'm Not Feeling Pressured This Summer"

Before she retired, Noreen expected her summer to resemble those of the past. Once she retired, however, she acknowledged a difference.

> Now things are different for me. Every other summer I would have to plan things so that I could get all of the things done that I wanted to do. Every minute was accounted for. I'm not feeling pressured this summer. What gets done gets done and that's it. (August, 2001)

Summer offered time to reflect. As she thought about her teaching career and the hectic pace at school, she spoke of the importance of maintaining balance in life and how difficult that balance is to achieve when one is teaching. She indicated also that without balance, teachers give everything they have to teaching. "You can't give everything to teaching and maintain any quality of life" (August, 2001).

Reflective time in retirement also gave her a chance to think about herself and her own identity, her story to live by. She announced her identity with pride, "I'm a retired teacher and I'm celebrating my retirement. It is time to move on to the future. I am not going to use teaching as a crutch and spend a lot of time looking back on what was" (August, 2001). In addition to identifying herself as a retired teacher, she explained that being a "certain age," having the "right attitude" and "life experience" allows one to "sift

out a lot of chaff." In other words, Noreen felt she knew "what to overlook and what not to get stressed out about" because "it is going to pass" (August, 2001). Her story to live by shifted slightly during the summer as she began to describe herself as a retired teacher but continued to maintain a strong connection to the story she lived before she retired.

"I Didn't Realize I was Off the Treadmill Until After the Summer Passed"

In spite of having time to reflect and celebrate being retired, she maintained a hectic schedule over the summer. Recognition of just how busy she was and how the summer resembled summers of the past was not clear until it was over. With the arrival of fall, Noreen experienced the full impact of being retired and a shift in her story to live by. Only after the summer ended was she able to fully recognize how her story to live by had changed and continued to change.

"Before I Retired, I Didn't Have Choice in How to Spend My Time"

Noreen described her teaching in terms of how some experiences were rewarding while others were demanding. In a similar way, she described how her life as a teacher differed from her life in retirement. One noticeable change involved time and the difference between structured time in teaching and unstructured time in retirement. Her preference for unstructured time was revealed when she said, "I love the idea that if I don't feel like doing something one day, I can put it off and do it another day" (October, 2001). Her story to live by in retirement changed with the addition of unstructured time.

"I No Longer Take Ownership for Everything"

Before Noreen retired, her story to live by included involvement in organizing numerous events and activities for others. She continued to organize events for others after she retired but would not take ownership of "everything" or "assume a lot of responsibility for getting things done" (September, 2001). Her story to live by changed when she reduced her involvement in organizing events. Even though she organized a retired teachers' group early in the fall and spoke of how she "didn't mind getting the

first meeting going," she restated her belief in not taking complete ownership when she said "I'm not going to do it all myself" (September, 2001).

"I Haven't Given Teaching Up But it is Different"

Several months after she retired, Noreen recalled memories of her life as a teacher. She acknowledged "the stress that teaching brings" (September, 2001) and explained how stress in teaching related to change. "Over my career, there has been change in the way I have been valued as a teacher" (October, 2001). Acknowledgement of demands in teaching did not, however, destroy her passion for teaching as she created opportunities to connect with students and to her story to live by as teacher. She began to volunteer in a classroom and when she described her experience of being back on the school landscape, she drew a comparison between the story she lived as a full-time classroom teacher and the story she was living as a volunteer teacher. The comparison revealed a change in her story to live by. "I guess I haven't given it [teaching] up but, it's different. I can pick and choose when I want to be there and I can go to places where I know I can make a difference" (September, 2001). Returning to schools as a volunteer teacher indicated a shift in her story to live by as teacher as well as a connection to the story she lived as teacher before she retired.

"If I Can do Something for Somebody Else, My Life is Better"

Noreen set priorities before she retired and continued to revisit and confirm them in retirement. Some priorities held a connection to other people and were embedded in her story to live by. She valued friendships and continually offered help to others. Friends and family had been and would continue to be a priority in her life. Towards the end of our conversations, her story to live by as friend was confirmed when she became very involved in providing care to a dying friend. Being a friend had been part of her story to live by before she retired. Being a friend was a significant part of her story to live by after she retired.

Other priorities she set in pre-retirement times involved mentoring young teachers and advocating for colleagues who needed someone to "speak up for them because they won't speak up for themselves" (September, 2001). After she retired, however, her story to live by told of how she became less involved in mentoring and advocating for others and more involved with friends. Her story to live by as friend maintained a strong connection to who she was before she retired. Her story to live by as mentor and advocate changed significantly, however, when she reduced her involvement in mentoring and advocating for others in retirement.

"I Hope to Find Balance"

One priority did not have as direct a connection to others. Although she continued to care for others and volunteer at school, thereby maintaining a connection to her story to live by as friend and teacher, she intended to "build time in for myself" (September, 2001). This priority was driven by the realization "that as you get older, your sense of spirituality and your mortality become more of a reality" (September, 2001). Taking time for herself was a new experience for Noreen and as she thought about her own mortality, she spoke of the hope of finding balance in her life between doing things for others and taking time for herself. Her story to live by changed when she included time to care for herself.

"Retirement is Not a Magical Time"

Before Noreen retired, she looked forward to the opportunities retirement would provide. Although she continued to speak positively about retirement opportunities after she retired, she indicated the presence of challenge on the new landscape. One challenge came from "trying to figure out who you are" (September, 2001). She equated the experience of retiring to that of going through a divorce, "through a time when I asked myself who I was" (September, 2001).

Recognition of challenge posed by the change in landscape from school to retirement was accompanied by solutions. One solution involved having a plan. Noreen

believed that if she took steps to initiate a plan before retirement started, then challenge would be bearable. Part of her plan involved the creation of friendships and interests. Her plan also included ways to live on less income. Another solution for dealing with challenge in retirement came from her ability to accept challenge as an opportunity to develop "strength of character" (October, 2001). As her story to live by changed in response to challenges in retirement, she felt confident in her outlook. Having a plan and being able to view challenge as an opportunity to develop strength of character helped to sustain her story to live by.

"Retirement is a Wonderful Opportunity to Find Yourself Again"

Along with challenge, retirement offered Noreen opportunities. She explained the difference between teaching and being retired. "In the hustle of a career, you tend to lose your identity." "Retirement is a wonderful opportunity to find yourself again" (October, 2001).

Retirement provided her with time to reflect on her story to live by, on her identity and how that story changed when she retired. She also spoke of how retirement offered the opportunity to gain balance in her life and with balance came a feeling of calmness. The opportunity she valued above all others however, was being able to make choices. She explained. "The biggest opportunity for me in retirement is the ability to make choices. When you are teaching, you don't have many choices. But when you retire, you have choice" (October, 2001). Noreen's story to live by changed in response to the opportunities that retirement offered to her.

"Retirement is a Time to Sort the Wheat From the Chaff"

During a conversation six months after Noreen retired, she described her retirement experience in contrast to the experience of being a teacher. "When we teach, we are just trying to tread water. But now that I'm retired, I am very settled" (December, 2001). Being settled meant she could "pick and choose" what to become involved in

because she had "time to sort the wheat from the chaff" (December, 2001). Sorting the wheat from the chaff presented her with choice and choice offered hope for the future.

Noreen was hopeful about her future and attributed feelings of hope in part to her story to live by as teacher. She was grateful for the "gift teaching gives" (October, 2001). She spoke of how being a teacher had provided her with "skills that broaden us and prepare us for so many things" (October, 2001). As she storied herself into the future, she continued to maintain a hopeful attitude. "There are so many interesting things to do and I want to do them all" (December, 2001).

CHAPTER VII: CONTRASTING THREADS WEAVE A CHANGE IN DESIGN

A Metaphor of Threads and Weavings

"Each of us constructs a life that is his or her central metaphor for thinking about the world" (Bateson, 1989, p. 241). The self is therefore regarded as "logically central to any way of experiencing the world" (Bateson, 1994, p. 66). According to Bateson (1994), in order to move through society and deal with new contexts and relationships each time a new context or relationship appears, "we are asked to put the tenuous certainties of self at risk again and again" (p. 66). Therefore, "the self fluctuates throughout a lifetime and even through the day, altered from without by changing relationships and from within by spiritual and even bio-chemical changes" (p. 66). "We improvise and struggle to respond in unpredictable and unfamiliar contexts, learning new skills and transmuting discomfort and bewilderment into valuable information about different—even, at the same time, becoming someone different" (p. 66). In other words, we are composing a life where the self, or "basic thread with which we bind time into a single narrative" (Bateson, 1994, p. 66) "continually re-imagines the future and reinterprets the past in order to give meaning to the present" (Bateson, 1989, p. 29). "The forging of a sense of identity is never finished. Instead it feels like catching one's image reflected in a mirror next to a carousel—" (Bateson, 1989, p. 219).

As life is composed, identity changes. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) describe identities as "narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds" (p. 95). They may "solidify into a fixed entity, an unchanging narrative construction, or they may continue to grow and change" (p. 95). They are also "multiple depending on the life situation in which one finds oneself" (p. 95). In other words, "the identities we have, the stories we live by, tend to show different facets depending on the situations in which we find ourselves" (p. 95). Carr (1986) explains how changes in the landscape have an "intimate connection to one's identity and undoubtedly affect one's story to live by" (p. 168).

In this inquiry, I examined the "intimate connection" (Carr, 1986) between identity and the change in landscape as teachers retire. In order to understand that connection or, in Bateson's (1994) words, what happens as the context changes and "we are asked to put the tenuous certainties of self at risk again and again," I first listened to and learned from stories participants told. Listening to and learning from stories we collaboratively constructed over a year long series of conversations assisted in making sense of how the participants' identities shifted as they changed from being positioned as teachers on the landscape, to being positioned off the landscape. Stories the participants told as they approached retirement, at the time they stepped off the school landscape and in the six months following their move off the school landscape to the retirement landscape revealed plotlines of their stories to live by. The plotlines of their stories to live by revealed shifting identities. In order to represent the plotlines in each participant's story to live by, I chose Bateson's (1994) notion of the self as a "basic thread" and a metaphor of threads to represent plotlines of each participant's story to live by. Plotlines of stories to live by are referred to as identity threads.

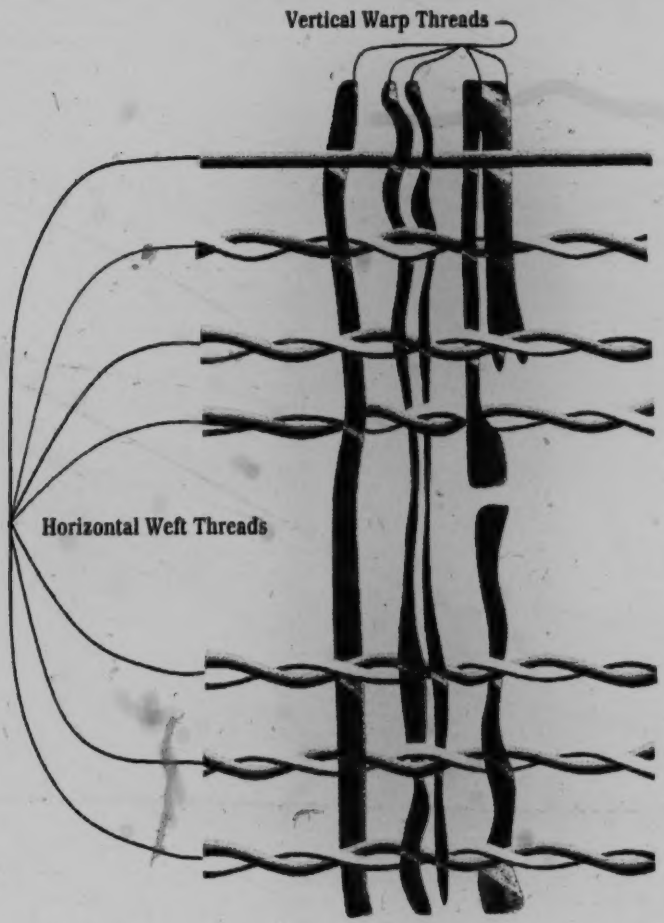
The recognition of plotlines or identity threads contributed to my understanding of the intimate connection between identity and the change in landscape. Greater understanding of the connection was gained when participants' stories were set side by side. The laying of stories side by side not only helped to make visible each participant's shifting identity but also to illuminate what contributed to the change in his or her identity as he or she stepped off the school landscape into retirement. Bateson (1994) acknowledges the depth of understanding that comes from setting stories of experience side by side and the insight gained from such a move. In other words, the laying of stories side by side revealed contributions made by the change in landscape to the shift to participants' identities. In this inquiry, a metaphor of threads represents features of the landscape that contributed to a shift in participants' identities. I refer to them as contributing threads. Contributing threads collectively represent the impact that features

of both landscapes, the school landscape and the retirement landscape, had on the participants' identities when the landscape changed.

In order to represent the participants' shifting identities and contributions made by the change in landscape, I chose a metaphor of threads combining to form a weaving. As unique identity threads combined with contributing threads, a woven design for each person formed. Combining identity threads with contributing threads shaped individual weavings that displayed each participant's story of retiring from teaching. Threads that depicted each participant's identity, his or her story to live by, formed the vertical warp threads in each participant's weaving. In order to honor participant experience, the design principle of variation proved useful. This principle acknowledged the unique qualities of each participant's story to live by with warp threads that varied in length, width and curve of line. Contributing threads, threads that contributed to the change in identity, formed the horizontal weft threads in each weaving and wove in, out and around the vertical warp threads. Weft threads depicted features of the landscape that influenced all three participants' stories to live by. These threads repeated in each participant's story of retiring and were exposed using the principle of repetition. The relationship between vertical warp threads that employ the principle of variation and horizontal weft threads that employ the principle of repetition is depicted by a sample weaving in Figure 7-1.

Often the principle of variation appears in combination with the principle of repetition. Things in nature, for example, contain both repetition and variation. No two leaves are exactly the same. There is repetition in the cycles of seasons but no two cycles are ever exactly alike. No two human beings are exactly the same, nor do they experience life in exactly the same way (Hollingsworth & Hollingsworth, 1989). Both principles could have been used to describe warp threads of identity and weft threads that contributed to change in threads of identity. The principle of repetition, for example, could have been used to indicate that some threads of identity appeared to repeat in each participant's weaving. All participants had a thread that identified them as a teacher.

Figure 7-1 - Vertical Warp Threads Combine with Horizontal Weft Threads to Form a Weaving.



However, to focus on the repetition of identity threads would have discredited individual experience and destroyed the unique qualities of these threads. I chose the principle of variation to safeguard differences in threads of identity. In a similar way, both principles could have been employed to describe threads that contributed to change in threads of identity. The principle of variation could have been employed to indicate differences in contributing threads. However, it was not the variation in length, width or curve of these threads that was significant but that they repeated in each participant's story to live by. Therefore, I used the principle of repetition to expose contributing weft threads.

The combination of these principles was used in a different way in this inquiry. Instead of using both principles of variation and repetition for all threads, I chose to employ the principle of variation to depict warp identity threads and the principle of repetition to acknowledge the repetitive nature of weft threads that contributed to a change in warp identity threads. As warp and weft threads combined, the principle of repetition facilitated the creation of a visual unity amongst the participants' weavings. In other words, the same contributing weft threads appeared in each participant's weaving to create visual unity. In contrast to repeating weft threads, the principle of variation facilitated the creation of partial change in vertical warp threads and, therefore, a different design in each participant's weaving (Hollingsworth & Hollingsworth, 1989).

The Use of Color

Just as people first interwove threads to compose a woven design and used color to breathe life into the composition (Quiller, 1989), I chose colored threads in each person's weaving to honor the "intimate connection" (Carr, 1986) between identity and the change in landscape and, to represent identity warp and contributing weft threads. In order to assign a color to individual warp and weft threads, I referred to the colors on a color wheel. One primary color represented each participant's story to live by or their identity warp thread: red for Frank, yellow for Lorraine and blue for Noreen. Weft threads that ran horizontally through and around warp threads and signaled features of the

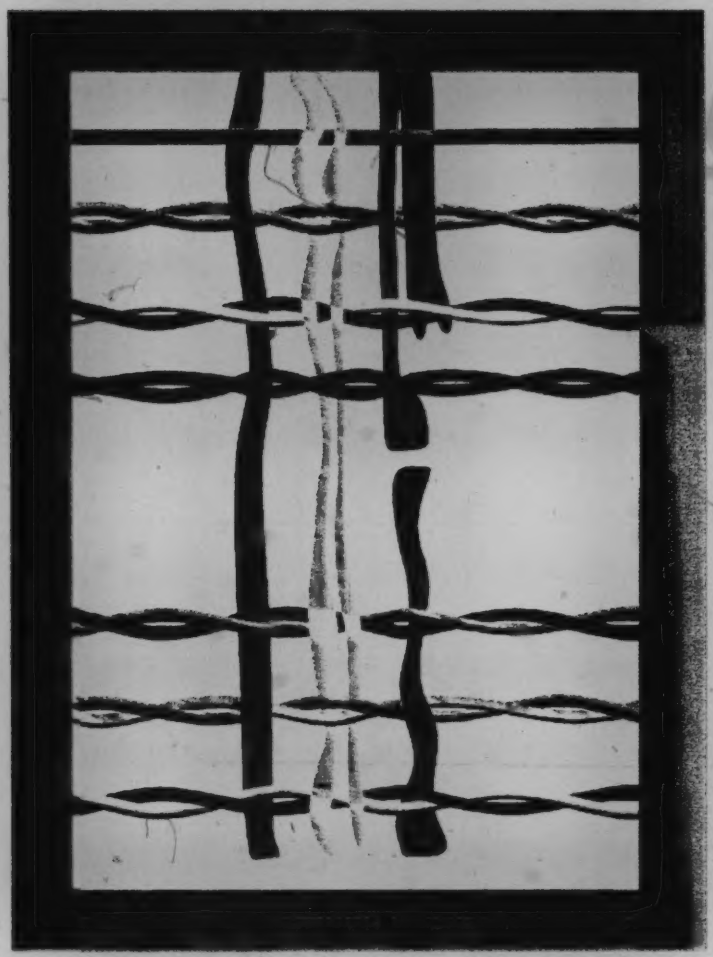
landscape that contributed to a change in identity threads were represented by a variety of colors. Each weft thread was assigned a separate color. Two of the three secondary colors, green and orange, along with five of the six intermediate colors of yellow green, blue green, red orange, yellow orange and red violet distinguished each repeating weft thread. The intermediate color, blue violet and, the secondary color, violet were used in a different way. Instead of presenting them as repeating weft threads that wove across warp identity threads, they were used to matte and frame each weaving. They represented part of each participant's story to live by before and after they retired and surrounded each weaving to matte and frame each narrative of the experience of retiring. As colored warp identity threads were interwoven and framed with different colored weft threads that depicted contributions to a change in identity, a unique and colorful picture story of each participant's experience of retiring appeared. An example of a combination of colored threads is provided in Figure 7-2.

Weavings Formed as Threads Combined

In this chapter, I describe how weavings formed as threads combined. To begin, I identify and describe each participant's prominent identity threads from the stories they told before they retired. A description of the change to their identity threads after the participants retired follows. Then, with identity threads and the change to those threads made visible, I lay the participants' stories of retiring, side by side. This action exposes threads that contribute to the change in identity threads and repeat in each weaving. Finally, a description of the impact repeating threads had on each participant's identity threads is presented in honor of individual experience.

The purpose of assigning particular identities to warp threads or features of the landscape to contrasting weft threads is not to suggest that either identity or features of the landscape can be defined as specific threads that do not extend beyond their borders. Identity and landscape not only hold an "intimate connection" (Carr, 1986) to each other, but also to other less prominent threads, other threads that make up one's identity and the

Figure 7-2 - An Example of the Combination of Colored Threads



landscape on which one lives. The purpose of identifying particular identity and landscape threads and depicting them as they appear throughout figures in this chapter is to provide a way to honor each participant's story of retiring. Certainly other ways of depicting threads and their connections are possible.

Identity Threads Revealed

Identification of each participant's story to live by as represented by identity threads, along with a description of how the identity threads varied in length, width and curve before participants experienced a change in landscape provided me with a base of comparison for how those threads changed after each participant retired.

Frank's Red Identity Threads

The plotlines of Frank's story to live by changed when he retired from teaching. In order to make visible the change in his story to live by, I describe the way I varied the length, width and curve of each thread in order to represent the plotlines of his story to live by. I describe variations in the length, width and curve of each identity thread before he retired as well as variations in those threads after he retired.

Life experiences taught Frank the value of helping others. As a way of giving back to society, he made a commitment to provide volunteer assistance to individuals in distress. I represent this commitment, his identity as a volunteer, with a thread that is uniform in width but curves slightly to reveal his commitment to several volunteer organizations.

In addition to the plotline of volunteer, Frank lived a story of friend to colleagues and advocate for teachers. He valued professional relationships and extended himself to assist others as they dealt with problems on the school landscape. Although I represent this friend/advocate plotline by a thread that lasted throughout his teaching career, it appeared wider at the beginning, then narrowed significantly in the middle years when he felt pressure to change positions on the school landscape. The thread I chose to represent

this plotline did not disappear completely when the context at school challenged his willingness to trust but continued to narrow until he retired. I represent this plotline by a thread that changed from a curved to almost straight line as he moved from a willingness to act on behalf of teachers to reluctance and refusal to become involved in their struggles.

The dominant plotline of Frank's story to live by was teacher/administrator. I represent this plotline through a long thread that traced back to childhood where vivid thoughts of becoming a teacher originated. At the beginning of his teaching career, I show the thread as wide. Shortly thereafter, I show the thread of teacher and administrator as two strands of unequal width. The narrower of the two strands represents his story of teacher that followed a straight path as he maintained close contact with students in the classroom. The wider strand represents his identity as an administrator and although it curved slightly away from the narrow teacher strand, I show it as following a straight path. I show them in close proximity to give a clear indication of their connection. Frank spent most of his time at school involved in administrative duties but also identified himself as a teacher. At approximately mid point in his career however, he left his administrative position. I represent this through severing the administrator thread. He returned to the classroom and in response to this landscape change, I show his teacher identity thread as widening slightly but never regaining its original size. Instead, as the years passed, I represent it narrowing significantly and when he left teaching to retire, I show his teacher identity thread as disappearing from sight.

Frank's identity threads, threads I assigned to represent the plotlines of his story to live by, formed the vertical warp threads of his weaving. Figure 7-3 provides a visual representation of his red identity threads.

Frank's Changed Identity Threads

Change in the plotlines of Frank's story to live by did not take place at the same time or to the same degree. As he stepped off the school landscape onto a different

Figure 7-3 - Frank's Red Identity Threads Before He Retired

landscape, a landscape on which teachers retire, some plotlines shifted slightly to reveal gradual change while others shifted abruptly to indicate a more sudden change in his story to live by.

The thread that represents him as a volunteer continued to lengthen in response to his ongoing commitment to helping others. The width of this identity thread was sustained as an indication of his willingness to commit the same amount of time to volunteering as before he retired. After he retired, I show the thread as following a very straight path, indicating that he was no longer involved in volunteering in several different settings but committed to fulfilling increased responsibilities in only one organization.

The thread that represents him as a friend/advocate almost disappeared at the end of his career when he announced, "I'm gone, I'm finished" (Conversation, June 30, 2000). However, with the completion of summer routines, he took steps to re-establish friendships with teachers from his past. I represent his increased involvement as a friend with a thread that begins to widen and then appears as two strands running side by side. His original plotline of friend/advocate changed to become two separate but attached plotlines in his story to live by. I represent the plotline of friend with a wider strand of the friend/advocate thread that continued to widen and curve as past acquaintances were renewed. I represent the plotline of advocate with a narrow strand of the friend/advocate thread that curved only slightly when he was able to resume any talk of school and be a supportive listener to his wife. Although he continued to acknowledge teachers who needed someone to speak on their behalf and was willing to listen to their frustrations, he was no longer willing to devote time or energy to voicing their concerns.

I represent the plotline of teacher with a thread that disappeared from sight at the end of the school year when he left teaching to retire. He refused to engage in talk of school and made it very clear that he would not look for connections back to the landscape he left. He was able to maintain a separation from school until several months

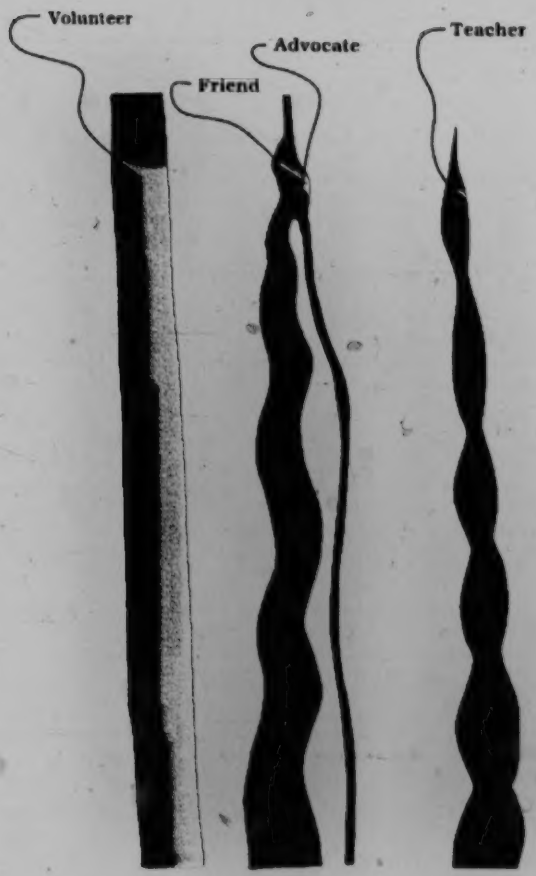
later when he began to experience increased financial difficulties. Although he considered other possibilities for employment, it was an opportunity to return to the classroom as a substitute teacher that he pursued and accepted. Consequently, the plotline of teacher reappeared. As it appeared, it presented significant change. I represent this plotline with a thread that is very narrow as it resurfaces and then widens to reflect change, change that caused Frank to recognize similarities between his changed plotline as a substitute teacher and the one he lived when he first started to teach. Positive experiences on the school landscape as a substitute teacher reminded him of the teacher he was at the beginning of his career. The landscape had not changed but Frank was positioned differently on it and this change in position brought a change in his plotline of teacher. I represent this change with a thread that lengthens as he continues to accept substitute teacher assignments, becomes wider whenever experiences at school are positive and narrows when challenges appear. The thread also curves significantly to take a different direction with each new teaching assignment.

Changes to the plotlines in Frank's story to live by after he retired are represented by red identity threads in Figure 7-4.

Lorraine's Yellow Identity Threads

Three distinct threads represent Lorraine's story to live by: artist, learner and teacher. Before she retired, she described her life in terms of activities that related to art, learning and teaching. I represent her artist plotline with a long, curved thread that appeared wider at times. This long thread originated in childhood and continued throughout her life. It varied slightly in width to reflect change in amount of time she devoted to art. For example, it appeared as a wide thread during her career as a commercial artist, then narrowed somewhat with a change of careers and widened again when she became a teacher. It curved to reflect the different directions her interest in art took. However, it curved predominately towards her teacher thread where most of her

Figure 7-4 - Frank's Red Identity Threads After He Retired



time was spent exploring art related to her teaching. It curved only slightly away from teaching when she found time to pursue personal interests.

Lorraine identified herself as a learner. I represent her learner identity with a long thread to reflect a life long interest in learning. It remained consistently wide as an indication of its strength and curved to reflect the many directions new learning took her.

I represent Lorraine's identity as teacher with another prominent thread. Although slightly shorter than the other two, it was far more visibly prominent. Its length marked a thirty-three year commitment while its width indicated the dominance of teaching in her life. It followed a straight path and curved slightly to indicate several changes in teaching assignments. The lack of curve in this thread does not, however, reflect the consistent change Lorraine employed in her teaching. Change with the view to improve student learning was embedded in her dedication to teaching and is represented by an almost straight thread.

These identity threads, threads I assigned to represent the plotlines of Lorraine's story to live by, formed the vertical warp threads of her weaving. Figure 7-5 provides a visual representation of her yellow identity threads.

Lorraine's Changed Identity Threads

Lorraine experienced life shattering family events during the last two months of teaching when her sister and her son were diagnosed with serious illnesses. Although these events shaped her story to live by during that time, their full impact took place immediately after she retired. I represent the loss of her teacher and artist plotlines by omitting the teacher and artist threads. The thread representing her story as a learner came to the fore and increased in width to reflect her increase in learning. As she tried desperately to learn of ways to bring relief to her dying sister, she also learned to prepare for her inevitable death. The diagnosis of her son's illness posed an urgent need to learn new information vital to his wellness. Not until the summer ended, when her sister died and her son's illness became manageable, did she think of who she was becoming as she

Figure 7-5 - Lorraine's Yellow Identity Threads Before She Retired

retired. I represent the re-entry of her other plotlines with the reappearance of her teacher and artist identity threads.

I represent her artist thread as a wide one, having shifted to indicate a renewal of past interests and an intention to pursue new forms of artistic expression. With an ongoing interest in art, it continued to lengthen. It curved to take new directions as her interests in art changed and grew. At times, when she was asked to work with students and teachers, it curved towards the thread representing her teacher plotline.

The warp thread that represented her as a learner never disappeared and continued to lengthen, widen and curve. Its length gave a clear indication of her commitment to lifelong learning. A pronounced increase in its width appeared at the time she retired and was sustained throughout the summer months when her family was in crisis. As the demand for new learning about the illness decreased, however, her learner thread did not diminish. Instead, it retained its width and continued to widen with each new interest in learning. It also curved significantly as new learning took her in many new directions.

Although each plotline in Lorraine's identity shifted in noticeable ways, is was her teacher plotline that changed the most. Before she left teaching to retire, the presence of this plotline overshadowed the others. After she retired, the plotline of teacher disappeared and did not surface until the end of the summer. As her story as teacher began to reappear, significant change was evident. The thread that I use to represent her as a teacher before she stepped off the school landscape does not resemble the thread I use to represent change in her teacher plotline after she retired. Although she expressed a desire to maintain contact with people at school in order to sustain pre-established student and teacher relationships, the connection she was willing to make had a changed plotline. She became a teacher who was called on to provide expertise and was therefore in contact with students and colleagues only when requests were made for her input. In reflection of this change, I represent her plotline as teacher with a long identity thread that narrowed considerably and widened only when she chose to engage in activities at

school. It also changed its curve. Instead of maintaining a straight path, her teacher identity thread curved to follow new directions. Student, teacher and parent requests took her in many directions as she provided graduate students with instruction, junior high students with hands on assistance in art projects, curriculum instruction for teachers and guidance for parents in schools.

Changes to the plotlines in Lorraines' story to live by are represented by yellow identity threads and appear in Figure 7-6.

Noreen's Blue Identity Threads

Conversations with Noreen suggested three dominant plotlines in her story to live by. One plotline was comprised of three related plotlines that told of her as friend, mentor and advocate for colleagues. Although each plotline could be view separately, they seldom appeared in isolation but wove together into one. Many colleagues were her friends, some she mentored, for others she advocated. The plotline of organizer was recognized and named by Noreen as an indication of the importance she placed on organizing events and activities for others. The third and most dominant plotline in her story to live by was teacher.

As a friend/mentor/advocate, Noreen valued others. In her first year of teaching, her teaching partner showed her "how important it is to be kind to other teachers when they are starting out" (Conversation, January 31, 2001) and from then on, she made a point of extending herself to colleagues. Whether they needed a friend to talk to, or a mentor to question and provide expertise or an advocate to speak up for them, Noreen was there. I represent components of her plotline of friend/mentor/advocate by a thread that contains three interrelated strands. The strands of this thread continued to lengthen, maintain a consistent width and, curve towards the thread that represented her plotline of teacher.

Noreen prided herself in being able to "take charge when there is a need to have something done" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). Her identity as an organizer was a

Figure 7-6 - Lorraine's Yellow Identity Threads After She Retired

significant part of her identity at school. Although she organized social gatherings for friends outside of school whenever time allowed, she was often an organizer at school. She recalled many different events and programs she initiated and devoted time to in order for them to succeed. I represent her identity as organizer with a long, wide thread that curves predominately towards the thread that represents her identity as teacher. This long, wide thread curved slightly away from her teacher identity thread whenever she organized activities outside of school.

Noreen taught primary grades throughout the thirty-one years of her teaching career. The prominence of her plotline of teacher was revealed when she said, "Teaching is my identity" (Conversation, June 1, 2001). I represent this plotline as a long, wide and straight thread to reflect her lengthy commitment to teaching.

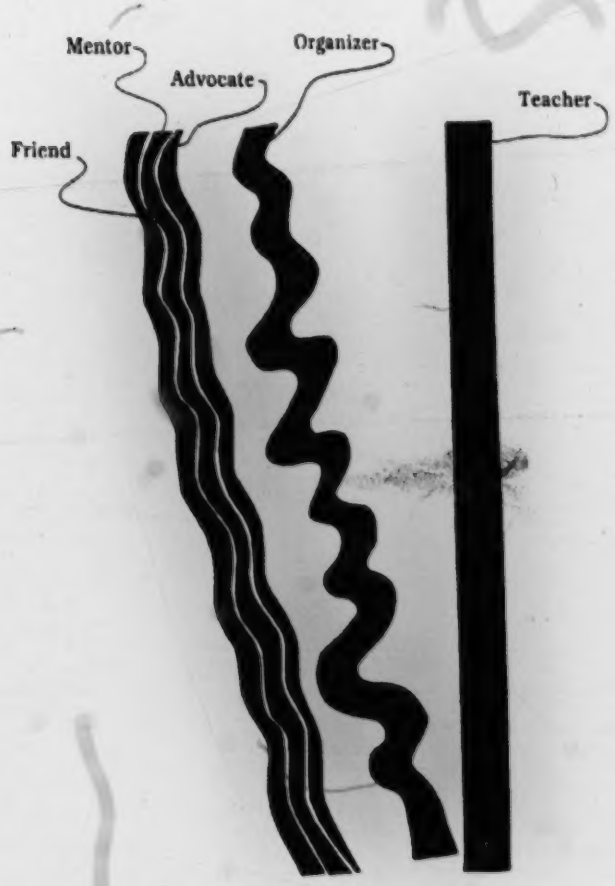
Identity threads, threads I assigned to represent the plotlines of Noreen's story to live by, formed the vertical warp threads of her weaving. Figure 7-7 provides a visual representation of her blue identity threads.

Noreen's Changed Identity Threads

As Noreen's retirement story began to unfold, the threads I used to represent her story to live by before she retired remained visible. The threads did not however retain their original form. I represent change to the plotlines of her story to live by with threads that vary in length, width and curve.

Without a daily connection to school, I changed the identity thread that represented her plotline as a friend/mentor/advocate. She was no longer positioned on the landscape to mentor or advocate for teachers at school. She explained. "I used to speak up for people at school but now I don't have to" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She continued to live her plotline as a mentor by providing guidance to exchange students and continued as an advocate for educational change outside of the school setting. However, her involvement was limited. I represented the mentor/advocate part of her friend/mentor/advocate plotline as two narrow strands of a thread that continued to

Figure 7-7 - Noreen's Blue Identity Threads Before She Retired



lengthen but narrowed and curved away from her plotline of teacher. On the other hand, the part of this plotline that told of Noreen as friend indicated increased involvement with colleagues, retired teachers and others who had no connection to school. I represent the friend part of her friend/mentor/advocate plotline with a strand of thread that continued to lengthen, gain width and curve away from her plotline of teacher.

The plotline of her story to live by that told of Noreen as an organizer also changed after she retired. She indicated this change when she said, "I no longer have to take ownership for everything that is going on at school" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). With reduced involvement in organizing school related events, her focus for organizing changed. She continued to facilitate meetings for her book club, arrange games of bridge and golf and, look for new avenues to live her story as an organizer but changed her commitment to organizing events. For example, she started a retired teachers' group and arranged a social function on their behalf but was "not going to do it all myself" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). In response to this change, the thread that represented her plotline of organizer changed. I represent change to her plotline of organizer with a long thread that narrowed as her involvement in organizing reduced. This thread also curved away from the thread that represented her plotline of teacher as she changed the focus of organizing from school related activities to events in her personal life.

Noreen retired knowing that for the first time since she started teaching, she was "able to let it go" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). She confirmed that she was ready to retire with comments like "Retirement just constantly feels right" and "the time is just right for me" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). In spite of feelings of relief, however, she acknowledged that she would miss certain aspects of teaching. "I know that the reason I have stayed teaching is because of the kids and wonderful parents" (Conversation, June 1, 2001). As she storied herself into the future, she planned to stay connected to teaching. "I know I'll always want to be connected to teaching because I have loved my teaching

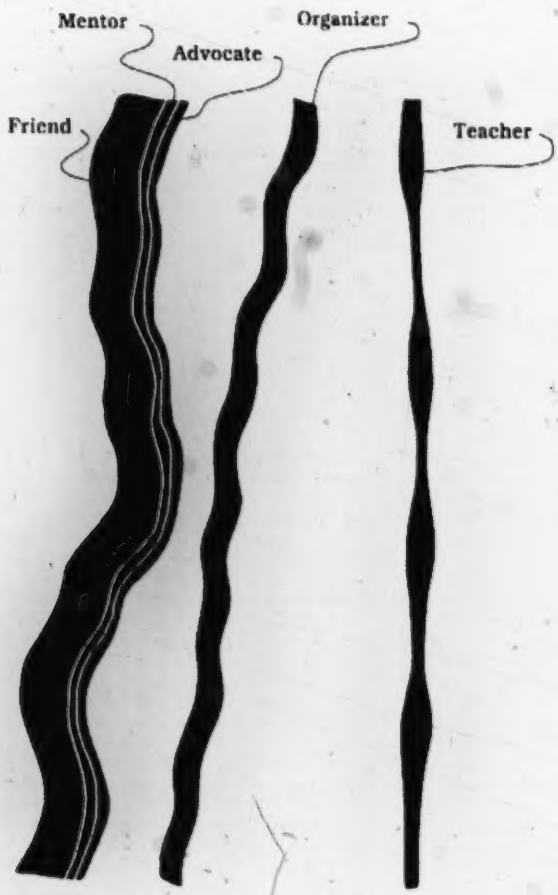
career" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). With the start of school in the fall, Noreen returned to school. Although her involvement at school resembled experiences of the past, her plotline of teacher changed. She explained the change. "I guess I haven't given it [teaching] up. But, it's different. I can pick and choose when I want to be there and I can go to places I know I can made a difference" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). I represent her identity as teacher with a thread that changed from one that lengthened, remained wide and traveled a straight path to one that continued to grow in length and follow a straight path but was significantly more narrow. Although this thread widened slightly whenever she returned to school to volunteer teach, its original width narrowed to indicate a significant reduction in the dominance of this thread in her life.

Plotlines of Noreen's changed story to live by are represented by blue threads that appear in Figure 7-8.

Laying Stories of Experience Side By Side

Now that plotlines of each participant's story to live by and the change to those plotlines have been identified and represented with warp identity threads, the following section reveals features of the landscape(s) that appeared when the participants' stories to live by were laid side by side. My intention in laying stories side by side was not to compare or draw conclusions about similarities and differences in individual stories to live by. My purpose was not to fragment individual stories of experience by investigating features of the landscape that do not repeat, but remain specific to individual participants. Neither did I intend to focus solely on the impact that features of the landscape had on participants' stories to live by. Individual participant's stories to live by were impacted in unique and different ways by the changed landscape. Some identity threads changed significantly from the impact of repeating features of the landscape, while others were less affected. The impact or shift in identity threads was described in honor of individual experience but the focus of this part of the study is to expose features of the landscape

Figure 7-8 - Noreen's Changed Identity Threads After She Retired



that repeated in each participant's story of retiring and contributed to a shift in individual identity threads. I represent features of the landscape that repeat in each participant's story and contribute to a shift in identity threads with repeating weft threads and refer to them as contributing threads.

In order to establish a context for the identification of contributing threads that repeat in each participant's story of retiring and the impact they had on identity threads, a review of the change to original identity threads is provided. A diagram of identity threads for each participant before they retired and the change to those threads after they retired is included as a visual representation of warp identity threads in each weaving.

Frank's Red Identity Threads Before and After He Retired

I represent Frank's volunteer plotline with an identity thread that continued to lengthen and maintain its width but changed to follow a straighter path. His friend/advocate identity thread changed from one that narrowed in the last half of his teaching career to one that separated into two strands. The wider of the two strands of this thread curved in the direction of friendship and continued to curve with each new contact he made, while the narrower advocate strand curved very slightly in response to requests made of him to listen and offer advice. Frank's teacher/administrator identity thread, a thread once composed of two strands, was reduced to one narrow strand that continued to diminish in width and curve until it disappeared at the end of his career. It did however resurface. It became a thread that widened with each new positive connection to school as a substitute teacher and narrowed whenever challenges appeared and he declined a substitute teaching assignment. It continued to lengthen and curved in different directions with change in teaching assignments.

Threads that represent Frank's identity before and after he retired are presented in Figure 7-9.

Figure 7-9 - Frank's Red Identity Threads Before and After He Retired

Lorraine's Yellow Identity Threads Before and After She Retired

I represent Lorraine's artist plotline with an identity thread that continued to grow in length but changed from one that was wider at times and curved towards her teacher identity thread to an even wider thread that curved in many directions. The thread that represented her as learner continued to widen and lengthen but changed to curve in a new direction, away from her teacher identity thread each time her personal interest in learning changed. Her teacher identity thread also changed from a wide thread that followed an almost straight path to a much narrower one that widened whenever she returned to school. It also curved slightly in response to a variety of requests to share her teacher knowledge.

Threads that represent Lorraine's identity before and after she retired appear in Figure 7-10.

Noreen's Blue Identity Threads Before and After She Retired

The thread I used to represent Noreen's plotline as friend/mentor/advocate changed significantly after she retired. Instead of a thread that held three strands of equal width, it became a thread with one wide friend strand and two narrower mentor/advocate strands. Although it continued to grow in length, it also changed from a consistently wide thread that curved towards her teacher identity thread to become a slightly narrower thread that curved away from her teacher identity thread. Her organizer identity thread changed from a long, wide one that curved towards her teacher identity thread to a narrower, less curved thread that moved away from her teacher thread. Before she retired, her teacher identity thread was long, wide and straight. It continued to lengthen and follow a straight path after she retired but changed to a narrow thread that indicated her reduced involvement in teaching.

Threads that represent Noreen's identity before and after she retired are presented in Figure 7-11.

Figure 7-10 - Lorraine's Yellow Identity Threads
Before and After She Retired

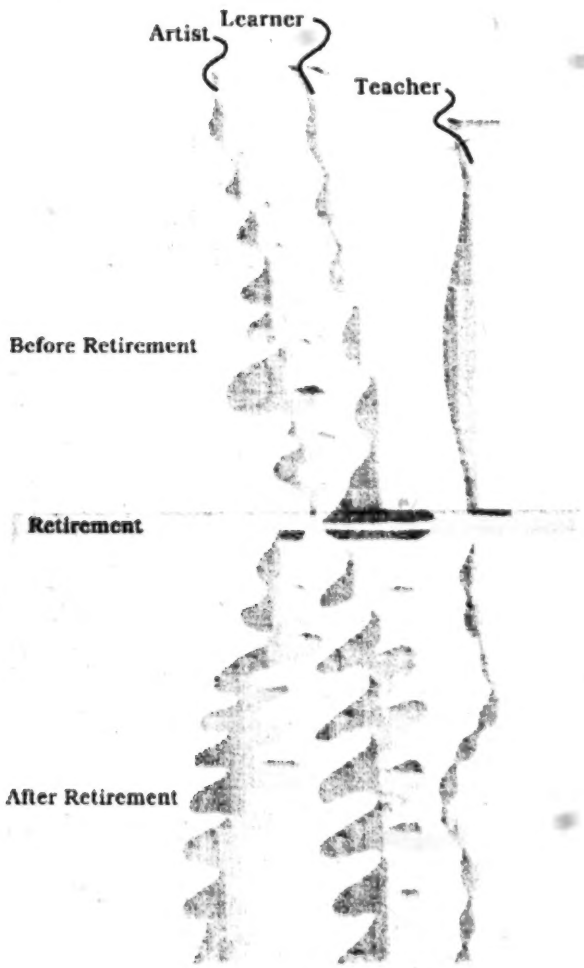
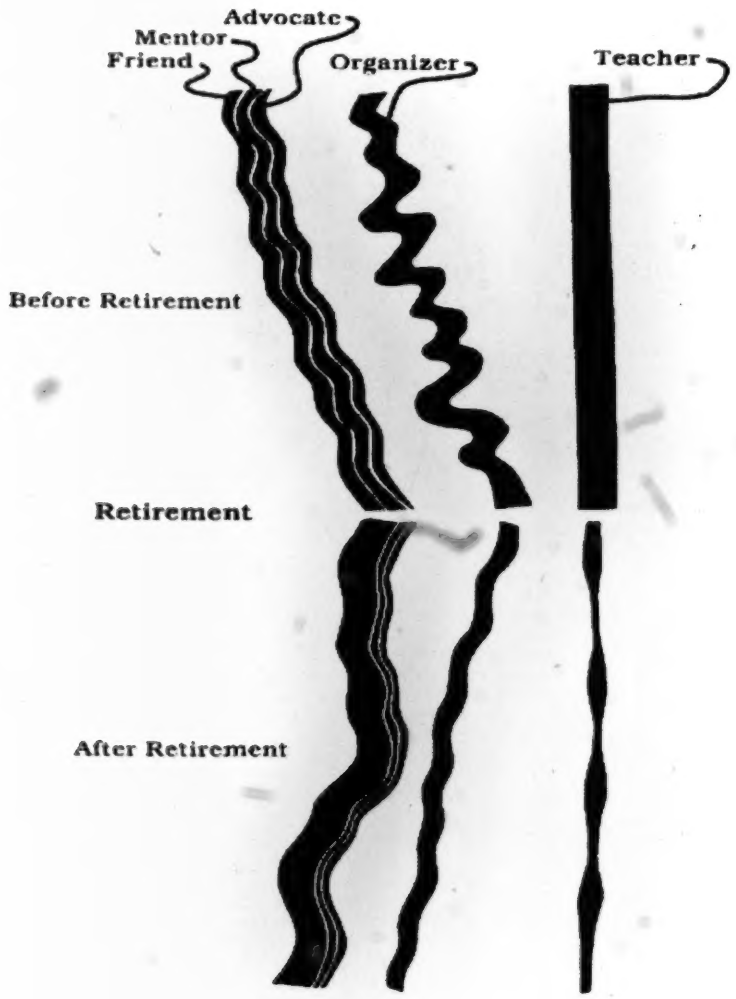


Figure 7-11 - Norreen's Blue Identity Threads
Before and After She Retired



Weaving Warp and Weft Threads Together

As participants' stories of retiring from teaching were told and individual stories were laid side by side, features of the school landscape and the retirement landscape that influenced a shift in the plotlines of stories to live by appeared. Some features of both landscapes consistently repeated in each participant's experience of retiring from teaching. I represent features of the landscape that repeatedly contributed to change in stories to live by with threads and refer to them as contributing threads.

Some contributing threads held a close connection to the sudden change in landscape from teaching to retirement. They surfaced in direct response to the change. Others however, did not appear to have as close a connection to the sudden change in landscape and were exposed instead by the relationship they shared with threads that were directly connected to the change. In order to gain an understanding of the impact that contributing threads had on identity threads and of the interconnectedness contributing threads shared, they will be described both individually and in relationship to one another. To further capture the relationship they shared with the changed landscape and with one another, they will be presented in a way that will display their proximity in the weaving. This is not to imply that individual contributing threads held only one connection or were related to each other in only one way. On the contrary, contributing threads shared relationships with one another in different ways and with other threads not considered in this inquiry. However, for the purpose of this inquiry, I presented them in relation to one another as told by participants' stories of experience. Contributing threads appear in the relational order they were presented in participant's stories of retiring.

Threads That Frame Each Weaving

Most contributing threads that caused a shift in the participants' identity threads are placed to weave in and out of the identity threads. Two other contributing threads are placed around the combined warp and weft threads to matte and frame each weaving.

These contributing threads also had an impact on each participant's identity but are presented as a matte and frame because they represent the participants' experience before and after they retired.

As warp and weft threads meet both matte and frame, they appear to end. The intent of representing one contributing thread as a matte and another as a frame however is not to imply that as identity threads touch the edge of the matte and frame they end. Instead, identity threads emerge from the top of each framed weaving as established threads and then disappear at the bottom not to vanish from existence but to continue. The purpose of the matted frame is not to ignore beginnings and endings of identity threads but to acknowledge repeating experiences that were part of each participant's life before and after he or she retired and contributed to a change in his or her identity.

Colors of Contributing Weft Threads

In addition to primary colors of yellow, red and blue that represent each participant's identity threads, contributing threads that wove horizontally through vertical identity threads and others that provided a matted frame to the story of retiring from teaching are presented in color. A green thread depicts the context in which each participant left teaching to retire. Two strands of a yellow green thread signify two different places on the school landscape. One strand represents the in-classroom place and the other the out-of-classroom place. A blue green thread acknowledges the impact that having a plan in place for retirement had on identity threads. An orange thread presents two strands. One strand of the orange thread represents how time contributes to a change in identity while the other acknowledges the impact of less stress. A red orange thread weaves strands that indicate how choice and the setting of priorities contribute to a change in identity. A yellow orange thread appears in close proximity to the red orange thread on the new landscape of retirement. Its two strands represent challenge. One strand indicates the presence of health challenges while the other tells of the challenge of living with a reduction in income. The last thread to weave across identity threads is a red violet

thread. It also consists of two strands. One strand indicates the participants' use of teacher knowledge and the other represents a connecting back to the school landscape. Two other repeating threads contributed to a change in the participants' identity threads but because they were part of both the school landscape and the retirement landscape, they are used to matte and frame each weaving. The matte is represented as a blue violet thread that offers hope and the frame is represented as a violet thread that continues to pose the question, "Who am I?" Figure 7-12 provides a visual representation of the relationship among contributing weft threads.

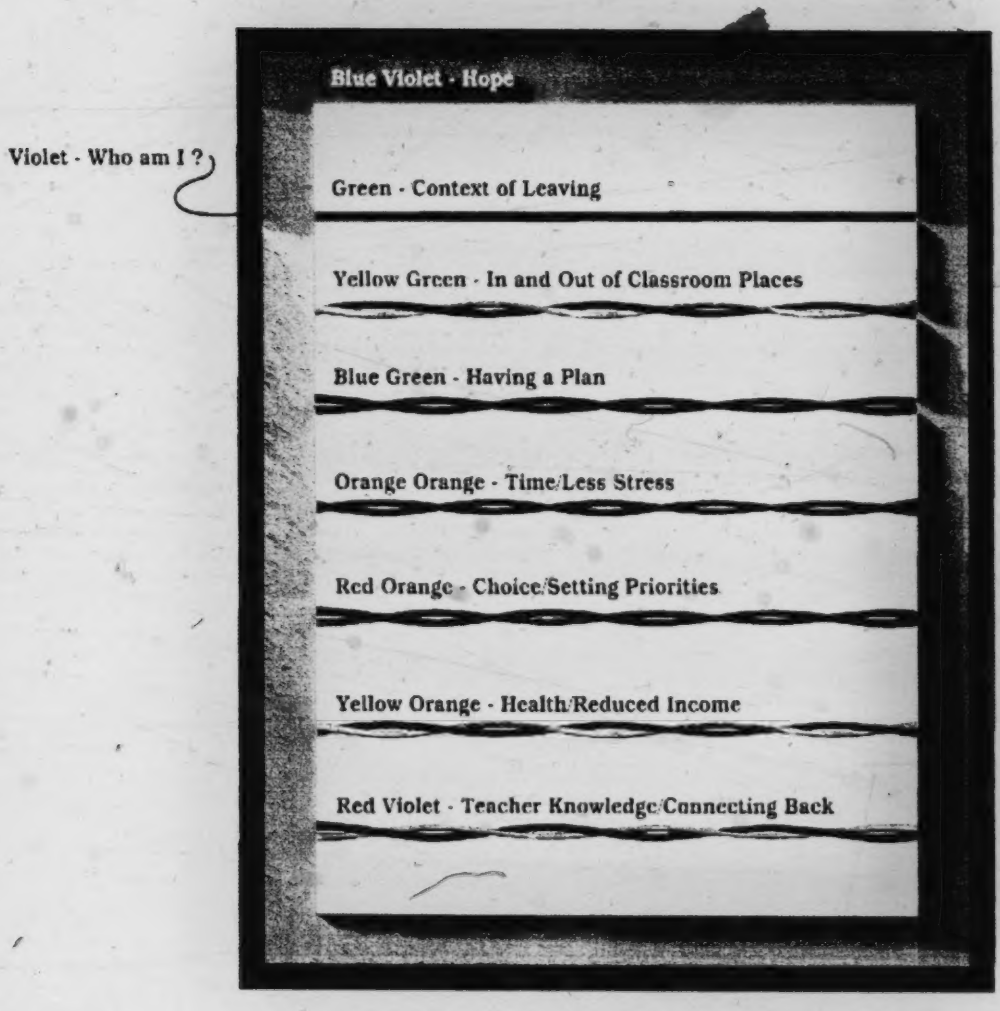
Weft Threads and Their Impact on Warp Identity Threads

The following section of this chapter reveals weft threads that represent features of the landscape(s). I presented them in relation to the landscapes of which they are a part. Ones that hold a connection to the school landscape are presented first. Others that appear to hold a connection to the retirement landscape are presented next. The order of presentation of contributing threads therefore relates to the participants' experience of retiring as they moved from being situated on the school landscape to stepping off the school landscape and onto the retirement landscape.

Green Thread: Context of Leaving

One feature of the changed landscape that contributed to a change in participant's stories to live by was the context surrounding each participant's leaving. If the participant retired feeling valued, appreciated, heard and without pressure to leave, then he or she was able to retire with a feeling of confidence. On the other hand, if the retiring participant left teaching feeling devalued, incompetent, without a voice and pressured to leave, his or her move to retirement was not accompanied by feelings of confidence. According to Bateson (1989, p. 37), no one can expect to go through life without meeting discouragement and criticism, but every failure is more costly if it is accompanied by the implied message from outside, and the hidden belief within, that little more could be expected. Bateson (1989) further explained that there is hope for "those who move

Figure 7-12 - Order and Colour of Contributing Weft Threads


Blue Violet - Hope
Violet - Who am I ?
Green - Context of Leaving
Yellow Green - In and Out of Classroom Places
Blue Green - Having a Plan
Orange Orange - Time/Less Stress
Red Orange - Choice/Setting Priorities
Yellow Orange - Health/Reduced Income
Red Violet - Teacher Knowledge/Connecting Back

beyond discouragement" (p. 37). If one is able to move beyond unpleasant and/or marginalized feelings caused by less than favorable circumstances surrounding his or her retirement, he or she may have a better chance of starting retirement with confidence. Participants in this study left teaching under different circumstances. However, the context did have an impact on their stories to live by. I represent the influence of the context of leaving with a green weft thread that repeats in each weaving.

The context surrounding Frank's leaving caused him to feel de-valued, incompetent and without voice in matters that affected him. Although not directly pressured to retire, neither was he encouraged to stay. This negative context had an impact on his story to live by and his identity as a volunteer. He refused to volunteer in a school setting but continued to volunteer in other organizations. The context of leaving had an impact on his story to live by as friend/advocate, which I represent as a friend/advocate warp thread. Frank continued to maintain a friendship with several teachers from school but was not willing to make the effort to build and maintain friendships with others or to advocate on their behalf. Instead, he looked outside of school to re-establish friendships with colleagues from his past. Although his volunteer and friend/advocate identity threads were somewhat influenced by the context of his leaving, it was his teacher thread that was most affected. The lack of support from administration, distant relationships with colleagues, student disrespect and parental harassment he felt at school plagued him until the day he left. The context of leaving destroyed his story to live by as teacher so that when he retired he felt great relief in knowing that he was no longer a teacher. He explained, "I will never go back to teaching" (Conversation, August 25, 2000).

Frank moved beyond the discouragement of his leaving and gathered the confidence and strength he needed to return to teaching. When he returned as a substitute teacher, he began to experience positive events that changed his feelings of discouragement and reluctance into a willingness to continue to teach. Encouraged by

positive experiences at school, his confidence increased and he began to re-story himself. Clearly, the context surrounding his return to teaching restored life to his story to live by as teacher. "I substitute taught in a high school and the experience was wonderful. I really needed that after leaving teaching so disrespected by students" (Conversation, December 22, 2000).

Lorraine felt valued by colleagues, administration, students and parents of the students she taught. Her contribution to the profession was acknowledged often in the days before she left as well as after she retired. This confirmation of her worth had an impact on her story to live by. The positive context surrounding her leaving contributed to her willingness to continue to live her story as artist in connection with her story of teacher. She explained. "I would really like to try an integrated arts approach on a small scale with kids who struggle with reading and use reading, writing and drawing together to see if it makes a difference" (Conversation, November 24, 2000). Her story to live by as learner, which I represent as a learner warp thread, found expression as she immersed herself in new learning in order to provide support to teachers at school. "I've been working with a mathematics teacher and I'm really interested in mathematical thinking. So, I'm reading mathematical biographies and I'm beginning to think that before I die, I might actually think mathematically" (Conversation, November 24, 2000). Her story to live by as teacher, represented as a teacher warp thread, shifted significantly in response to the context of her leaving. Although she looked forward to having time in retirement to pursue art and learning, she knew she would miss her relationships with students, parents and colleagues at school. In order to maintain some connection, she returned to school. "I still want to continue to work with kids because it is exciting" (November 24, 2001). Lorraine left the teaching profession feeling valued, heard, appreciated and with no pressure to go.

Noreen recognized the impact that the context of leaving had on her when she said, "I think that the circumstances at school before you retire have an impact on your

retirement" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She left teaching feeling valued and appreciated and acknowledged these feelings when she said, "I have been made to feel like I have made a difference in the lives of some children I've taught and that makes me feel good" (Conversation, June 30, 2001). In addition to gestures of appreciation that left her feeling valued, she felt her voice was heard. She had choice of when to retire. In response to the positive context in which she left teaching, her story to live by as friend/mentor/advocate, which I represent as a friend/mentor/advocate identity thread, changed. The friend strand of this identity thread became more prominent because she increased contact with friends both in and out of school. Although she reduced her involvement in activities as a mentor and advocate, she was willing to continue to mentor and pursue her identity as an advocate. Her story to live by as organizer, which I represent as her organizer identity thread, was encouraged by the positive context of her leaving. Although I represent a curve in it away from her teacher identity thread, it continued to lengthen to reflect her willingness to organize events and activities in her personal life. "I will continue to organize things that I feel have a purpose in my life" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). The positive context of leaving had the greatest impact on her story to live by as teacher. She continued to maintain a connection to school and although her involvement there was significantly reduced, she found ways to reconnect to her teacher identity thread. "I know I'll always want to be connected to teaching because I love my teaching career" (Conversation, March 28, 2001).

Two Strands of a Yellow Green Thread: Places on the School Landscape

A feature of the landscape I represent as a contributing weft thread that appeared in close proximity to the green thread because of its relationship to the context of leaving was a yellow green thread. This thread represents two distinct places on the professional knowledge landscape and reveals how experience in both places contributed to a shift in each participant's identity. Experiences on the in-classroom and out-of-classroom places on the professional knowledge landscape contributed to shifts in identity as the

participants took memories of both places with them into retirement. I represent the impact each place had on participants' identities, experience in the in-classroom and out-of-classroom places, with two strands of a yellow green thread.

1. One Strand of the Yellow Green Thread Depicts the In-Classroom Place

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe the in-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape as "a place where teachers teach and where curriculum is made, at least the curriculum that matters as far as students are concerned" (p. 12). When students enter this place, where curriculum is made with them in mind, the establishment of a caring community that is rich in relationships is possible. A teacher who motivates and encourages students by promoting growth of individuals is able to build and maintain rich relationships with them. When that teacher retires and takes positive memories of the in-classroom place with them, these memories have an impact on their stories to live by, their identity. Similarly, if a teacher experienced negative relationships with students on the in-classroom place, memories of that experience also have an impact on his or her identity, but the impact is different. I represent the in-classroom place with a strand of yellow green thread.

Frank's experience on the in-classroom place in the first ten years of his teaching career was positive and rewarding but changed in the last ten years before he retired. The caring relationships he once shared with students diminished. Certainly, many students did respond to his intent to establish a caring community in the classroom but others did not. As he tried to maintain that community, the disrespect he felt from some students and the harassment he felt from their parents caused him to have a far different view of the in-classroom place. Although, negative experiences in the classroom had little impact on his volunteer or friend/advocate identities, they had a significant impact on his identity as a teacher. Feelings of discouragement that originated in the in-classroom place contributed to the disappearance of the plotline of teacher.

In spite of the fact that he refused to consider a return to the in-classroom place when he first retired, several months later he returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher. Although the main reason for his return was financial, his willingness to reconnect was driven also by a need to view teaching in a more positive way. Fortunately, his willingness to risk a return to the classroom was met with positive experiences in the in-classroom place. Even though his relationship with students as a substitute teacher changed on a daily basis, brief encounters with them allowed him to glimpse and experience a caring relationship, a relationship similar in quality to the one he shared with students when he first started to teach. Returning to the in-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape restored his story to live by as teacher.

Positive experiences on the in-classroom place had an impact on Lorraine's story to live by and contributed to shifts in the plotlines of her story to live by. When she taught, her story to live by as artist was linked closely to the in-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape as she continually designed learning activities for students through the arts. When she retired, she was relieved to know she could devote attention to her own interests in art but also knew she would miss experiences as an artist in the classroom. In order to make a connection to the classroom, she offered to return to share her expertise as an artist. "I don't mind doing art stuff or running a card workshop in the classroom" (Conversation, November 24, 2000). In a similar way, positive experiences in the in-classroom place had an impact on her identity as a learner. Although the need to learn curriculum related topics no longer existed and she could focus instead on her own learning, she missed the connection between her identity as a learner and the classroom.

Lorraine tried to make a connection between her story to live by as learner and the classroom. She found that connection when she offered to work with a teacher "on planning the curriculum in math and science around the idea of a paradigm shift" (Conversation, November 24, 2000). Although she would not be teaching math or science

in the classroom, she was very excited to learn more about these topics in order to impact student learning. Memories of the in-classroom place had the greatest impact on her continuing story to live by as teacher. She did not miss classroom demands that included coping with thirty students in a classroom, being responsible for implementing behavior modification programs and marking student work. However, she did miss relationships with students. "I'll miss the excitement of watching kids come alive as they share their ideas" (Conversation, June 6, 2000). In response to the impact of the in-classroom place on her teacher identity, Lorraine planned to return to the classroom and to "do the things that I enjoyed most about teaching" (Conversation, November 24, 2001).

Experiences on the in-classroom place had an impact on Noreen's story to live by. She valued her relationships with students and in light of positive experiences in the classroom, she took steps to maintain a connection to this place. Students often became her friends as she made a point of staying in touch with them after she retired. Parents of children she taught also became friends. She invited student teachers and new teachers into her classroom to share and learn as she mentored them. She spoke up for children and parents whenever she felt they needed an advocate. Positive experiences in the classroom kept her story to live by as friend/mentor/advocate going. Encouraging experiences in the in-classroom place had an impact on her story to live by as organizer. Although she was not as involved in organizing activities for children as she was when she taught, she would help to organize in-classroom activities whenever she returned to the classroom to volunteer. Noreen's story to live by as teacher, a story I represent as a blue identity thread, was most influenced by the in-classroom place. She experienced feelings of both relief and sadness in knowing she was going to retire and leave the in-classroom place. She explained both feelings. "The classroom situation has really changed. Teachers are so busy with kids who have problems that it is hard to find time to teach" (Conversation, June 23, 2001). On the other hand, "When you focus on the things that you care about, on the kids, that is what I still love about teaching" (Conversation,

January 31, 2001). Noreen's experiences at school in the in-classroom place were predominately positive and she therefore maintained a connection to this place when she retired. Noreen's story to live by as teacher found expression in the in-classroom place as she picked places and times to volunteer teach in retirement.

2. One Strand of the Yellow Green Thread Depicts the Out-of-Classroom Place

The other place on the professional knowledge landscape exists when a teacher leaves the classroom. Out-of-classroom places are in the staff-room, in the office, in formal meeting places and in many other places where educators meet. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe it as existing in professional places with others. It is a different knowledge context than the one in the classroom. This knowledge gives little or no acknowledgement of a teacher's personal practical knowledge. The out-of-classroom place had an impact on participants' stories to live by during their teaching careers and contributed to their decisions to retire. The out-of-classroom place also contributed to a shift in participants' stories to live by, their identities, as participants moved off the professional knowledge landscape to retire. I represent the out-of-classroom place with the second strand of a yellow green thread.

Frank's decision to retire was significantly influenced by the out-of-classroom place. For ten years before he retired, he felt devastated by experiences on the out-of-classroom place. He struggled to cope with his experiences on the out-of-classroom place throughout his teaching career and his story to live by, his identity, was influenced by these experiences. When he retired, he experienced more relief leaving the out-of-classroom place than leaving the in-classroom place. There were no feelings of loss or desire to have any connection to the out-of-classroom place. Relief from its prescriptive and imposing presence caused a shift in Frank's identity. His story to live by as volunteer changed with the increase in energy he was able to devote to volunteering. Influences from experiences on the out-of-classroom place left him feeling there were few people he could trust. However, once off that place, Frank risked re-establishing old friendships and

making new ones. Without direct pressure to adhere to prescriptions of the out-of-classroom place, he was not only able to set the renewing of friendships as a priority but was also willing to listen to teachers' concerns when he stepped back onto the school landscape. However, he would not allow the out-of-classroom place to infringe on his story to live by as teacher when he returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher.

Lorraine's decision to retire was partially based on her experience of the out-of-classroom place. She was well respected by colleagues, administrators and others who were part of the out-of classroom place, but the demands "poured into the landscape via the conduit" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 10) became overpowering and interfered with her ability to function in the classroom. When she retired, she found great relief in the freedom that came from not having to deal with the prescriptive nature of the out-of-classroom place. Her story to live by as artist and learner flourished when she moved off the out-of-classroom place. Although she learned to cope with the demands sent via this metaphoric conduit during her career, her story to live by as teacher shifted when overwhelming demands were replaced by freedom from the demands of the out-of-classroom place. When she returned to the school landscape after retirement, she acknowledged the prescriptive nature of the out-of-classroom place without feeling she had to follow the prescriptions. She had the freedom to suggest alternative ways of doing things and the will to help facilitate their implementation. When asked if she would act as a consultant for a parent group who proposed a drastic change to school curriculum, she accepted the offer and provided information freely, without feeling over-powered by prescriptive directions from the out-of-classroom place.

Noreen indicated she would stay connected to the in-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape in retirement but would not miss "challenge from outside of the classroom" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). She spoke often of how teaching had changed because of demands placed on teachers from the out-of-classroom place. Report cards designed to please parents, "money men" making decisions about

programming, increased administration and, camps of teachers opposing one another contributed to the stress she felt from outside the classroom. The out-of-classroom place had a definite impact on her story to live by when she taught. When she retired and the influence of this place was no longer a challenge in her life, her story to live by, her identity changed. Without the constant pressure to deal with challenges from outside the classroom, she was free to devote additional time and energy to her friend/mentor/advocate identity. With more time and energy in retirement, she was able to organize programs at school when she chose to do so and use her organizer identity to organize various aspects of her personal life. The absence of the out-of-classroom place had the greatest impact on her teacher identity. She looked forward to returning to the classroom to volunteer and to not having to deal with challenge from outside the classroom. She was willing to reconnect to her story to live by as teacher and enjoyed having choice in when, where and how involved she would be as a volunteer teacher. She felt relief in knowing that the out-of-classroom place would no longer be part of her experience at school.

Blue Green Thread: Having a Plan

Before the participants left teaching, they storied themselves into the future. Some stories indicated that structured plans were in place and would either begin or continue as soon as school ended. Other stories told of partial plans that left time and space for new plans to be made. Still others indicated that definite plans for the future were not in place. After they retired, it became evident that if a plan for retirement was in place, the participant had a smoother transition into retirement than if definite plans had not been made. Having a plan for retirement contributed to the reappearance of, and change to, stories to live by. Although intentional plans for retirement came from the participants and were not directly related to the features of the landscape, the significance of having a plan became apparent when the landscape changed. I represent this contributing feature of the landscape with a blue green thread.

Before Frank retired, he planned to continue to volunteer and to re-establish friendships with colleagues from his past. After the landscape changed, his identity as a volunteer and friend was sustained. Although he gave some thought to what he would do to generate additional income in retirement, he was uncertain of what that would be. He explained. "Truck driving might be okay as a complete change of pace. But for now, I need to have free time to spend reading books and relaxing at home" (Conversation, June 30, 2000). He was certain, however, that he would never teach again and refused to give any thought to maintaining a connection to his teacher identity when he retired. The only plan he had for his identity as teacher was to end it. Without a plan to reconnect to his identity as teacher, it disappeared and did not reappear in the months immediately following his retirement.

As he struggled with financial concerns, he considered several employment opportunities but none interested him. Not until an offer to return to the classroom was made and accepted did he find relief and satisfaction. As he returned to the school landscape as a substitute teacher, not only were his financial problems alleviated, he was able to re-story himself as a teacher. His teacher identity reappeared.

Lorraine's plans for retirement centered on her identity as an artist and learner. She also indicated that she would maintain a connection to her teacher identity. "I already have a workshop for teachers the first week in September and a friend of mine asked if I would have time to do paper mâché with students who are making mascots" (Conversation, June 25, 2000). Having a plan for the future had an impact on her story to live by. Having a plan encouraged her as an artist, learner and teacher and, although these identities shifted, they did reconnect to the plotlines of her story to live by before she retired.

Noreen deliberately planned for her retirement. She spoke of the importance of having a plan when she said, "I think that if a teacher doesn't have something planned for retirement, they are going to have a heck of a time of it" (Conversation, March 28, 2001).

Although she looked forward to initiating new plans once she retired, plans she had established before she retired made for a smooth transition into retirement. Her story to live by as friend/mentor/advocate, which I represent as a blue identity thread, was sustained as she continued to meet with friends. Although she became less involved in mentoring and advocating, she planned to stay connected to her mentor and advocate identities. Having a plan had an impact on her story to live by as organizer. Before she retired, she planned to organize a retired teachers' group and to take a trip to Australia. Both plans were fulfilled after she retired. Pre-retirement plans to reduce involvement in organizing also became a reality. Her teacher identity changed in response to plans she made before she retired. She planned to return to the classroom as a volunteer teacher and once school started in the fall, her plan fell into place.

Two Strands of an Orange Thread: Time and Less Stress

Two features of the landscape surfaced as a direct result of the change in landscapes and contributed to a change in stories to live by. An increase in the availability of time and a decrease in stress appeared as features of the change in landscape and are represented by two strands of an orange thread. In order to reveal the impact both strands had on participants' stories to live by, they are described separately. However, as they are separately recognized, their interconnectedness is also acknowledged.

1. One Strand of the Orange Thread Depicts Time

The word time conjures up a variety of images and meanings depending on the context in which it appears. However, for the purpose of this inquiry, the thread of time will refer to a change in the amount of time available to a retired teacher and the impact that having enough time had on his or her life. Heilbrun's (1997) description of time is helpful in the context of retiring. Her interpretation suggests that people who have "world enough, that is those engaged in a demanding daily vocation, were short of time, while those without regular obligations have more than sufficient time, but no world" (p. 43).

Although she dismisses the "strict bifurcation" between world and time, she does raise two interesting considerations. On the one hand, an abundance of time may cause concern over the possibility of empty days in retirement. In other words, the amount of free time may be a new source of concern for the retired teacher who learned to live with daily routine and very little unstructured time. On the other hand, when the "world" of teaching is no longer part of one's life, there is time enough to pause and consider possibilities in life outside of school. Having enough time to plan for retirement before the participants retired was not possible. However, with time enough after they retired to think about what it was they wanted to do in retirement, their stories to live by began to change. I represent time with one strand of an orange thread that repeats in each participant's weaving.

The availability of time on the new landscape of retirement contributed to a shift in Frank's story to live by. This feature of the changed landscape offered him the opportunity to spend more time volunteering. He chose, however, to maintain the same amount of time volunteering. Instead of increasing his involvement, he reduced the number of commitments and spent time volunteering in one organization. Time in retirement had an impact on his identity as a friend/advocate. It had little impact on his identity as advocate because he refused to become involved in advocating for teachers. It did however have a significant impact on his identity as friend. Time offered him the opportunity to re-establish friendships with colleagues. The red warp thread I use to represent Frank's story to live by as teacher disappeared at the end of his career for several months. Although the reason for the reappearance of his teacher identity came from a need to access income and not as a direct result of having additional free time in his life, the availability of time did contribute to the change in his teacher identity.

The orange strand of time appeared in Lorraine's weaving at the end of the summer, when family matters became less urgent. She experienced freedom in living without the demands of teaching and with a reduction of demands in her personal life.

Although she intended to not waste time in retirement, she looked forward to having enough time to re-establish plotlines of her story to live by that have been left behind during the summer. Time caused her identity to shift and change. Her story to live by as artist, represented with a yellow warp thread, disappeared for a short time during a family crisis, and then reappeared in a changed form.

Time, which I represent as one strand of an orange thread, contributed to a shift in her artist identity. An increase in available time set her free to spend whatever time she chose to pursue interests in art. In a similar way, time permitted her to explore new learning. From the moment she retired, she spent significant amounts of time investigating alternative forms of medication to help family members deal with illnesses. When the focus of her learning changed, she found pleasure in having time to pursue her own interests. Her story to live by as teacher disappeared at the end of her career but reappeared after the summer in response to the availability of time. It did not, however, closely resemble its original form. Although time allowed her to renew contact with students and teachers, her identity as teacher changed. She was no longer a full time teacher with "world enough" (Heilbrun, 1997) and little time. Instead, she was a retired teacher who had time to offer expertise and assistance to students and teachers whenever requests were made. Her changed story to live by as teacher told of spending time but also told of how she limited her time in schools. She protected other plotlines of her story to live by, her identity as artist and learner by insuring that her time at school did not take time away from art projects or learning.

Noreen recognized the difference between the availability of time before and after she retired. Before she left teaching to retire, she described time in terms of its structure. Structured time left little time for anything other than teaching. She explained. "When you teach, your life goes on hold" (Conversation, January 31, 2001). Any activities she planned outside of school adhered to a structured timeframe. After she retired, however, she experienced the availability of time in her life and the choice in how to spend it. She

continued with plans she started before she retired and was able to pursue new interests because of the addition of unstructured time. Unstructured time in retirement had an impact on her story to live by. The availability of time contributed to a change in her identity as friend. Instead of being pressured by time restraints to meet with friends on weekends for short visits, she was able to meet with them often for longer visits. Time contributed to a change in her story to live by as organizer by encouraging her to become more involved in organizing activities for others. Although she took steps to safeguard time for herself, she did organize a retired teachers' group. She acknowledged the benefits of having time enough when she said, "I will continue to organize and keep busy doing things that I feel have a purpose in my life" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). The availability of time in retirement contributed to a change in her story to live by as teacher. Time provided her with freedom to volunteer teach at school where she could spend as much or as little time volunteering as she chose. Time also provided her with choice. She could choose to spend days at school helping students with their reading or not if other plans were made.

2. One Strand of the Orange Thread Depicts a Reduction in Stress

Before each participant retired, they spoke of how they looked forward to retirement as a time of less stress. During the six months before they retired, their stories indicated how ready they were to leave the stress of teaching behind. A reduction in stress was a feature of the change in landscapes and contributed to a shift in each participant's stories to live by. I represent this feature as the other strand of an orange thread, as it repeats in each weaving.

Job-related stress was a catalyst in Frank's decision to retire. Stress over a lack of support and increased demands, a decrease in collegial care and support, student disrespect and parental harassment, and a reduction in administrative support at school and outside of school overwhelmed him. Retirement was viewed as a way to relieve the stress he faced at school. When he retired, he was rewarded with a significant reduction

in stress and this change contributed to a change in his story to live by. Without the stress of teaching, he was able to accept greater responsibilities as chair of a volunteer organization. Reduced stress in retirement encouraged him to re-establish friendships and to begin to engage in conversations about school. Less stress in retirement contributed to the change in his teacher identity. Without constant stress at school, Frank was able to reflect on his identity as a teacher and to realize that not all experiences at school had been unpleasant. He risked returning to the classroom and his story to live by as teacher was restored.

Lorraine knew before she retired that demands of teaching were consuming much of her life and causing significant stress. She spoke of the impact of job-related stress on her life. "All these demands are so exhausting. In fact, after a day at school, I'm so tired from all the stress that I'll just sit and doze for a half an hour before I can get into my car to go home" (April 22, 2000). Her decision to retire was influenced by a vision of retirement that offered escape from stress. "I think to myself, okay just get through this one more time" (June 4, 2000). Although levels of stress intensified during the first days of her retirement as she dealt with a family crisis, they diminished when demands from outside school decreased. She spoke of the difference. "When I was teaching, I was so outward focused on school, kids and family. Now, there is a new branching in me. Part of the branching is inward and part is outward and I balance outer and inner growth" (November 24, 2000). At the end of the summer when family demands subsided, the retirement she had imagined began. She acknowledged the rewards of living with a reduction in stress. "I haven't felt pressure to get things done. My days are very full and time just flies. It's great to be doing things I enjoy" (December 22, 2000).

Without great stress in her life, her story to live by changed. A reduction in stress contributed to a feeling of freedom, freedom that allowed her artist identity to flourish. She became immersed in a number of different art projects and was excited about following new directions in art. Her story to live by as learner continued to unfold as she

purposefully read books to gain mathematical knowledge. The absence of stress encouraged her teacher identity to reappear. As it surfaced, however, it changed. Instead of accepting commitments at school that had the potential to cause stress in her life, she restricted her involvement to mentoring teachers and assisting students only when requests were made. "The reason I chose to retire was because I didn't have a life in the last couple of years. It was just so demanding. I don't want to go back to that kind of teaching" (November 24, 2000).

Noreen spoke often of how teaching had changed. She described change at school and the stress that accompanied it. "Teachers are taking on more and more and it is just exhausting. We are caught up in too many demands. All of the extras are killing teachers" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). After she retired, she experienced the relief of not having to deal with the stress of teaching. "I'm a retired teacher and I like the feeling it brings. I find there is more serenity. Retirement brings calmness" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). Less stress in retirement had an impact on her story to live by. Without the stress of teaching, Noreen became more involved with friends. Although she was open to mentoring students, advocating for others if asked to provide assistance and would consider organizing events in her personal life, she became less involved as a mentor/advocate and organizer. Reduced involvement meant less stress. Without the daily stress of teaching, she was keen to return to school to volunteer teach and, therefore reconnect to her teacher identity.

Two Strands of a Red Orange Thread: Choice and Setting Priorities

The changed landscape also offered choice to participants and an opportunity to set priorities. Choice and the setting of priorities were features of the landscape that contributed to a shift in participants' stories to live by and are represented by strands of a red orange thread. Both strands of the red orange thread are presented in close proximity to the orange thread as an indication of their connection to the availability of time on the changed landscape.

1. One Strand of the Red Orange Thread Depicts Choice

The new landscape of retirement offered choice to the participants. Although the range of choice varied for each participant, choice was a feature of the changed landscape that contributed to a shift in his or her story to live by. I represent this feature of the landscape with one strand of a red orange thread.

Frank enjoyed the rewards that choice offered on the changed landscape. Choice gave him a voice in decisions and an opportunity to be heard. "When I was locked into teaching, I didn't have a say. But now, I have a say in my destiny" (Conversation, December 22, 2000). Choice contributed to a shift in his story to live by as volunteer. He could choose where and when to spend time volunteering. His friend/advocate identity changed when he chose to re-establish friendships and become a listener instead of a spokesperson for teachers. His story to live by as teacher changed significantly when choice was offered. Before he retired, he felt he had no choice at school. He constantly tried to exercise choice in his career but his voice was seldom heard. Finally, the only choice that made sense to him was to leave. However, as the landscape changed, choice appeared. Choice on the changed landscape provided Frank with an opportunity to re-define his teacher identity. His choice to become a substitute teacher provided additional choice. He could choose where and when to teach, the grade level and subject areas and whether to teach or not.

Choice encouraged the expression of Lorraine's artist identity as she engaged in calligraphy, doll making, sewing, and the exploration of an unlimited variety of art forms. Choice contributed to a shift in her story to live by as learner in a similar way. Although she was interested in gaining knowledge of topics that related to teaching, choice allowed her to pursue a variety of other topics. Her identity, her story to live by as teacher, was significantly influenced by choice. She had choice in when to return to school, under what circumstances and where that connection to school was made.

Noreen experienced the rewards of choice in retirement. She explained, "the difference is that I can choose to do certain things or not. I am busy but I have choice in what I do and how busy I want to be" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She could choose to implement her plan for retirement or follow a new and different path. She had choice in how her story to live by as a friend/mentor/advocate would unfold. Choice contributed to a change in her organizer identity by offering a number of possibilities for putting her organizational skills to use. Choice enabled her to return to school and connect to her identity as teacher. She had choice in how much time to spend there, what subject areas to be involved with and where to volunteer teach.

2. One Strand of the Red Orange Thread Depicts Setting Priorities

The prospect of being able to exercise choice in retirement held great appeal for each participant. Choice was a feature of the changed landscape that offered a sense of freedom and endless possibilities. Choice also caused the participants to think about what was important in their lives and then to set priorities. One priority that appeared with the change in landscape was the recognition of the importance of people in each participant's life. Re-establishing or maintaining relationships with others stood out as a main priority. Frank purposefully took steps to re-new old friendships after he retired. Lorraine understood how precious life is and how important it is to maintain relationships with others from the experience of dealing with her sister's death. Noreen constantly made connections with people in her life. People became a set priority in each participant's life on the retirement landscape. Along with the priority of people, other priorities were set that reflected individual choice and experience. The setting of priorities was a feature of the landscape that contributed to a shift in each participant's story to live by. I represent this feature with another strand of a red orange thread.

With a change in landscape, Frank set priorities, priorities that contributed to a shift in his identity. Instead of volunteering in several organizations, he focused on one. Instead of advocating for teachers, he pursued friendships. Setting priorities helped him

to limit his involvement in substitute teaching as he reconnected to his story to live by as teacher.

Setting priorities contributed to a shift in Lorraine's artist identity. Given that her interest in art was vast, she set limits for herself in order to complete projects. Setting priorities shaped the direction of her story to live by as artist. In a similar way, her learner identity changed in response to set priorities by helping to focus the direction of her learning. Setting priorities caused a shift in her teacher identity by limiting the time she would spend at school. She was willing to offer expertise and assistance at school as a consulting teacher but would not take time away from the plotlines of her story to live by as artist and learner.

The setting of priorities was not a new experience for Noreen after she retired. She continued to make people a top priority in her life. After she retired however, she became aware of her own mortality. "Doing things for others is a constant in my life but I would also like to do certain things for myself. I hope to find balance in doing things for others and things for me" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). As she endeavored to find balance in her life, established priorities as well as new ones had an impact on her story to live by. She continued to be a friend, mentor and advocate for others but planned to become involved in helping people in palliative care and others with aids. "I'd like to do something beyond what I have already done to help others" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). Her identity as organizer changed when she refused to take ownership for organizing "everything that is going on" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She explained the difference. "When I taught, I assumed a lot of responsibility for getting things in the school organized and done. But now, I don't have to do that" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). "It is time to move on and let other people at school pick up the torch" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). Setting priorities contributed to a change in her teacher identity. She was willing to volunteer teach in order to assist children with reading but not to the exclusion of other priorities.

Two Strands of a Yellow Orange Thread: Challenge of Health and Reduced Income

The dominant story of retirement provides images of a financially burden-free, stress-less time of opportunity and growth on a new landscape. It is offered as a new beginning, a change that proposes the "good life." Images of retirement, however, may or may not mirror retirement life as it unfolds. In the journey from one landscape to another, from on the school landscape to off the school landscape, from teaching to retirement, life events may or may not be lived out through the positive images of the dominant story. Although the participants in this study were not concerned with images of retirement or the need to live up to standards set by those images, they did story themselves into the future in a realistic way. They each spoke of how retirement life could pose challenge to their health and their financial security. Challenges related to health and living with less income contributed to a shift in participants' identities and are represented by two strands of a yellow orange thread.

1. One Strand of the Yellow Orange Thread Depicts the Challenge of Health

Each participant acknowledged the importance of leaving teaching while they were healthy enough to enjoy retirement. Quality of life in retirement meant living without serious health concerns. When they retired, they acknowledged relief in knowing they had left teaching before health concerns appeared but were also aware that this concern would last throughout their retirement years. Concern over health issues was a continuing challenge. I represent the contribution of this challenge on the retirement landscape with one strand of a yellow orange thread.

Frank indicated the importance of health before he retired when he described why he was no longer willing to teach. "I will not risk my health to stay, my health is more important than that" (Conversation, April 20, 2000). After he retired, he spoke again of the importance of taking care of his health in order to maintain quality of life. "There is no escaping the high price you have to pay" (Conversation, December 22, 2000). Concern over maintaining health in retirement had an impact on his identity. Although he

did not relate volunteering or the re-establishment of friendship to his health, good health allowed him to pursue these sources of satisfaction. When he returned to teaching, he was protective of his health by limiting the amount of time and energy he would spend at school. His teacher identity changed when he became a substitute teacher. It was his hope that reduced involvement in teaching would safeguard his health in retirement.

Lorraine understood the importance of this concern before she retired when she experienced an incident involving a health scare. "That's when I knew it was time to do something for me and that's when I knew I didn't want to do this [teach] any more" (Conversation, April 22, 2000). Family illness made her very aware of health matters at the time of her retirement and caused her to think about her own life. "I think about the time I have left and know that it moves along. You have to make every day a good one in some way, because you never know" (Conversation, September 10, 2000). Although she did not have personal health issues to deal with, a general concern about maintaining health in retirement contributed to a shift in her story to live by. Her identity as artist, learner and teacher changed when she began to make a conscious effort to do things that were important to her.

Noreen knew before she retired that "your health dictates how things will go because you don't always know what is around the corner" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). Staying healthy continued to be a challenge in retirement. She explained, "I was in a car accident just a day before the last day of school and it made me realize how fragile life is. I really want to get out and do things before I leave this planet" (Conversation, June 30, 2001). In another conversation, she indicated that she had arthritis in her knees and that it was not going to get any better. "I've taken the survival course for living with arthritis but I have it and I have to live with it" (Conversation, August 8, 2001). In response to her concern about maintaining quality of life by staying healthy, her story to live by changed. She continued to mentor and advocate, but valued friendships and would, therefore, spend more time being a friend than a mentor or an advocate. She was

willing to organize activities for others but with reduced involvement. She continued to maintain a connection to her teacher identity but protected herself by limiting time she spent volunteering at school. "I want to do certain things while I still have my health" (Conversation, September 7, 2001).

2. One Strand of the Yellow Orange Thread Depicts the Challenge of Reduced Income

The image of a financially secure retirement, free from financial concerns and previous financial commitments was not part of the participants' experience of retiring. Instead, a reduction in income posed a challenge to the quality of their retirement life. The degree of challenge this feature of the new landscape presented varied for each participant but in spite of variance, the challenge of a reduced income contributed to a shift in identities. I represent this challenging feature of the landscape with another strand of a yellow orange thread.

Frank was very concerned about living with less income before he retired. He spoke often of the challenge he would face in retirement when his income would be significantly reduced. "The financial end of retiring is the biggest worry" (Conversation, May 25, 2000). Concern over this challenge intensified when he retired. "In the last week or so, I have become very anxious about my bank balance. It just keeps going down as payments are made and with little coming in, it is really starting to scare me" (August 25, 2000). "Money is always going to be a problem and I will have to continue to find a way to make ends meet" (Conversation, January 19, 2001). The challenge of living with less income had an impact on his identity. Although it had little effect on his story to live by as volunteer, it did have an impact on his identity as friend/advocate. He could meet with friends who lived close by but had to limit contact with friends and family who lived farther away. He described an incident that gave a clear indication of the challenge he faced in living with a reduction in income. "We aren't planning any trips but would like to visit our daughter at Christmas. I thought I deserved a holiday after I retired but the bottom line is that you have to pay for it" (Conversation, August 25, 2000). Frank's

teacher identity was also influenced by the challenge of reduced income. As he searched for a way to alleviate the pressure of not having enough money, he returned to the school landscape as a substitute teacher. This move not only brought a partial solution to his financial concerns but also provided an opportunity to re-establish his identity as a teacher.

Lorraine was not concerned about a reduction in income until after she retired. She gave little thought to living with less income until she became aware of the impact it was having on her life in retirement. She spoke of this challenge when she described the adjustment she was forced to make in her spending. "I know that I can't buy the things I could before I retired and it comes down to not having much money to get the odd thing in the house fixed" (Conversation, January 19, 2001). A reduction in income contributed to a shift in her story to live by. She guarded the amount of money she spent on resources for art and learning projects and although she did provide expertise and assistance at school, she was not willing to devote a great deal of time and energy without monetary compensation.

Noreen made no mention of the fact that she would be living on a reduced income until several months after she retired. At that time, she indicated how "financial matters get in the way" and could "really have an impact on whether you can afford to retire or not" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She had concerns "about money and realized that it would be less" (Conversation, October 1, 2001) but chose to view this challenge in a positive way. "My life is not going to change significantly by a reduction in income because of how I accept that reduction. There is more strength in character in having to live with less and I am prepared to do that" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). Willingness to accept this challenge came from "times when you had less and had to decide what was important and where money should be spent" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). She had also planned for retirement. "I've had to plan for retirement and figure things out so that I would have enough money" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). Financial planning and a

willingness to live with less income reduced the impact this feature of the landscape had on her story to live by. Although an increase in contact with friends meant an increase in spending, she chose to become more involved with friends. She reduced her commitment as an organizer at school and, although this change was accompanied by less spending, she continued to organize activities for others. Along with a reduction of income, the need to spend money on school related things disappeared. "I found that when I taught, I spent a lot of my own money on things for the classroom, on the children and for staff functions. When you retire, you don't need as much" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). Noreen's story to live by was only slightly changed by a reduced income because of the way she chose to view this feature of the changed landscape.

Two Strands of a Red Violet Thread: Sharing Teacher Knowledge and Connecting Back to the School Landscape

Each participant made the decision to retire when they did because they felt the timing was right. They looked forward to retirement and a change in landscapes. Although each viewed the change of landscapes from different vantage points, the change in their connection to the school landscape did have an impact on them. Shortly after they left the professional knowledge landscape, they returned to it. Reasons for their returns varied but they each expressed a desire to share their teacher knowledge and connect back to the landscape that had been part of their teaching lives. I represent opportunities to share teacher knowledge and the connection back to the school landscape with strands of a red violet thread.

1. One Strand of the Red Violet Thread Depicts the Sharing of Teacher Knowledge

As the participants retired, they storied themselves into the future. At the same time, they reflected on past experiences. As they thought of their future on a different landscape, they reconstructed memories from the past. The combination of future and past thoughts helped them to deal with the move to retirement. The process of making sense of the present by combining future thoughts with past experience was one they had

used throughout their teaching careers. It provided them with teacher knowledge and their teacher knowledge was a significant part of their teacher identity. It was their way of knowing, a way of knowing that they took with them into the future as they made sense of their experiences on a different landscape. Each teacher in this study not only took their teacher knowledge with them when they retired but they also looked for ways to express that knowledge on their new landscape. Finding ways to express their teacher knowledge contributed to a shift in each participant's teacher identity. I represent the sharing of teacher knowledge as a feature of the changed landscape with one strand of a red violet thread.

When Frank first retired, he had no desire to share or express his teacher knowledge in retirement. Several months later however, when he returned to the school landscape as a substitute teacher, his teacher knowledge found expression. Substitute teaching in a variety of classroom settings allowed him to use his teacher knowledge. Putting his teacher knowledge to use not only brought feelings of satisfaction and confidence but also contributed to a shift in his teacher identity. He changed from a teacher who cared not to express that knowledge to a substitute teacher who relied on his personal practical knowledge to provide expertise when he returned to the familiar landscape of school.

Lorraine's teacher knowledge found expression in a number of different settings when she retired. She tutored students, mentored teachers and provided expertise to teachers and parent councils for re-designing school programs. Continuous requests to share her teacher knowledge were made by others who recognized her abilities. Although she was protective of the amount of time she was willing to devote, she was also encouraged by these requests. Opportunities to express her teacher knowledge in retirement had a significant impact on her teacher identity. She was no longer a classroom teacher but a retired teacher who was willing to share her teacher knowledge with others on the professional knowledge landscape.

Noreen could hardly wait to find expression for her teacher knowledge in retirement. With the start up of the new school year, she returned to school to organize a reading program and spent a number of days gathering information on children and designing programs to meet their needs. She found joy in sharing her teacher knowledge just as she had done in the past. To begin with, it appeared as though her teacher identity had changed little in response to opportunities to express teacher knowledge. However, there was a significant change or shift in her teacher identity. Before she retired, she taught a number of different subjects and spent countless hours preparing to teach each one. Although she was interested in many subjects, teaching reading was her passion. After she retired, she chose to share her teacher knowledge as she volunteered at school in helping children learn to read. Noreen's teacher identity changed when she became a retired teacher who used her teacher knowledge to help children learn to read.

2. One Strand of the Red Violet Thread Depicts Connecting Back to the School Landscape

Opportunities to express teacher knowledge in retirement came from connections each participant made back to school landscapes. Lorraine chose to include the school she retired from as a place to connect to. Although Frank and Noreen did on occasion return to the school they left at the end of their teaching careers, they chose to find expression for their teacher knowledge in different schools. Regardless of where they made a connection to the professional knowledge landscape, the experience of returning to a school landscape was a feature the change in landscape offered and a feature that contributed to a shift in each participant's teacher identity. Each participant's teacher identity changed when they connected back to school. I represent this feature with one strand of a red violet thread.

Connecting back to the school landscape had a significant impact on Frank's teacher identity. He changed from a teacher who refused any connection to school, to a retired teacher who enjoyed the benefits that substitute teaching offered. Positive

experiences at school encouraged him to continue to return. Not only was he willing to accept unfamiliar teaching assignments but also risked a return visit to the school he retired from. Connecting back to the school landscape contributed to a change in his teacher identity. Frank was no longer a classroom teacher. Instead, he was a substitute teacher with a different connection to the school landscape.

Lorraine safeguarded time in retirement. She refused to spend a great deal of time at school but was open to invitations that allowed her to reconnect to the school landscape. Connecting back to school and maintaining contact with students sustained her teacher identity. She explained. "I would like to maintain contact with the school for the next couple of years because there are kids there who have been very special to me. Going back would give me a chance to talk with them" (Conversation, November 24, 2001). Connecting back to school not only put her in contact with students but also with colleagues and parents. In response to connections she made back to the school landscape, her teacher identity was sustained but change to that identity was evident. She was no longer a full-time teacher. She was a retired teacher who would connect back to the school landscape when she chose to become involved.

Noreen purposefully looked for opportunities to connect to the school landscape. She drove approximately one hundred kilometers a day for two to three days a week during the months of September and October to volunteer at school. Her willingness to devote time and energy to children was an indication of her intent to maintain a connection to the school landscape. Connecting back to the school landscape sustained her identity as a teacher. However, her teacher identity changed. She became a retired teacher who volunteered her time and expertise on the school landscape.

Matting Each Weaving: Blue Violet Thread of Hope

Throughout the study, participants voiced concern. Before they left the profession, they were concerned over the decision to retire and about the impact that living on the school landscape had on their lives. Although they had little time to think

about their retirement lives, they were also concerned over what the new landscape would pose. In spite of their concerns, however, they continually looked for possibilities to turn challenges into opportunities for growth. This is not to say that every challenge was viewed with optimism. At times, overwhelming challenge left them feeling defeated and wondering how to survive. In spite of the challenges they experienced, they were eventually able to view challenge from a more positive perspective. This ability to turn challenge around and view it from a different and more positive point of view was part of their lives on the school landscape and continued to be part of who they were in retirement. It was revealed both before and after they retired as they continued to story themselves into the future. Retirement did offer challenge but the participants found hope in turning challenges into opportunities for growth. A hopeful attitude contributed to a shift in each participant's story to live by.

Although their intent to find hope in retirement did not appear as a visible feature of the new landscape, it appeared in response to the change in landscapes. I represent this contributing feature, a feature that appeared when the landscape changed, with a blue violet thread. Unlike other features of the change in landscape that contribute to a shift in participants' stories to live by, the blue violet thread is not presented as a horizontal weft thread. Instead of weaving in and out of vertical threads that represent participant's identities, I place the thread of hope around each participant's weaving. The blue violet thread represents the matte surrounding each participant's weaving.

Frank understood from experience the contribution hope presented whenever challenge appeared. The search for hope was part of his life on the school landscape when features of the landscape posed great challenge to his story to live by as teacher. Although he dismissed evidence of his story to live by as teacher at the end of his career when he burnt his red sweater, he was able to overcome the challenge teaching posed and regain a positive outlook because of the hope retirement presented. Instead of accepting the burden of what challenge on the school landscape had left him with, he chose to

accept the end of his teaching career as an "end to something and the re-birth of something else" (Conversation, June 30, 2000). He spoke often of the importance of the Serenity Prayer in his life and of how it helped him to view challenge in a more positive way. Hope enabled him to turn challenge on the new landscape into opportunities for growth. It reappeared when the landscape changed and contributed to a shift in his identity. His story to live by as volunteer changed when he accepted the position of chair in a volunteer organization. Although he met numerous challenges in this new role, hope encouraged him to find solutions to problems and to improve conditions. Hope contributed to a slight change in his identity as friend/advocate. Instead of refusing to listen to teacher-talk after he retired, hope encouraged him to support friends and colleagues who continued to deal with challenge at school. For several months after Frank retired, he was not at all hopeful about his story to live by as teacher. However, a break from teaching and the need to gain additional income prompted him to think about his teacher identity in a more positive and hopeful way. A changed attitude encouraged him to return to school and to begin to compose a changed story to live by as teacher. "Teaching is fun again and it has brought back lots of good memories" (Conversation, October 14, 2000). "It's great to see colleagues and to talk with them. I am willing to teach, even if students are really challenging" (Conversation, November 24, 2000). "I have a say in my destiny. I can talk about school and my smile is back" (Conversation, December 22, 2000). Hope made a significant contribution to a change in Frank's identity as teacher.

The intent to welcome challenge for the possibilities it presented describes Lorraine's story to live by. Maintaining a positive view was how she taught and how she encouraged her students to look at life. Even when she was challenged by unexpected change in family member's health, she worked hard to find answers to dilemmas that left little or no hope. When she retired, she continued to look to the future with hope. "I don't think of leaving teaching as an ending nor retirement a stopping place for me"

(Conversation, November 24, 2000). Her willingness to welcome challenge and be open to change was revealed when she said, "When you get to the top of one hill, there is a new horizon because the horizon line changes. I say to myself, I've gotten this far, surely I can make the next hill to view a new horizon" (Conversation, November 24, 2001). Lorraine's words indicate her ongoing hopeful attitude. Her ability to see hope in life would continue to contribute to change in her identity. She was an artist and learner who would continue to look at challenge as opportunities for growth. She was a retired teacher who knew from past experience how to deal with challenge. Challenge would be part of her retirement life but she would welcome its presence as she continued to look for hope in the future.

Before Noreen retired, she recognized challenges in teaching. After she retired, she spoke of challenge on the new landscape of retirement. In spite of the fact that both landscapes presented challenge in her life, she recognized the contribution hope made in changing her story to live by. For example, on the last day of school she said, "I woke up with a smile on my face and anxious to get on with the next stage of my life" (Conversation, June 30, 2001). She took many good memories with her when she retired and looked forward to "making new memories" (Conversation, May 11, 2001). Willingness to accept challenges as opportunities came from her story to live by. She explained. "I have a theory about life. Life is attitude and I try to have a positive attitude" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). This attitude came from life experiences. "Life experience has taught me a lot and I've been able to sift out a lot of chaff. You just have to have the right attitude" (Conversation, August 8, 2001). It also came from a realistic view of retirement. "Retirement is not magic. Some people think that because they have worked and worked that when they retire, life will be great but, it is not a magical time" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). In spite of knowing that retirement posed challenges, Noreen was able to find "more serenity and calmness" there (Conversation, September 7, 2001). She was excited also about the possibilities that being sixty would offer. "Now

that I'm sixty years old, I feel that I'm entitled to have a little more time to do some things that I want to do" (Conversation, August 8, 2001). Noreen found hope in retirement when she said, "I think retirement is a wonderful opportunity to find yourself again. To find out who you really are and what it is that you want to do" (Conversation, October 1, 2001).

Hope was a feature of the new landscape that contributed to a change in her story to live by. Openness to challenge and hope for the future contributed to a change in her identity as friend/mentor/advocate. Her identity as friend was sustained and became more pronounced as hope provided her with the strength to offer support to a terminally ill friend. Although her identity as a friend changed as hope encouraged her to look for ways to offer support to friends, hope also encouraged her to maintain her identity as a mentor and advocate. She would continue to invite exchange students into her home and provide mentorship. Hope also encouraged her to advocate for teachers and students by investigating how money was being spent in education. Although she was unsure of how her story to live by as organizer would be told in the future on the new landscape of retirement, hope encouraged her to investigate new opportunities to use her organizational abilities. "There's another life out there and I'm not afraid to it" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). The feature of hope was presented by the change in landscape and contributed to a change in her story to live by as teacher. Hope for the future encouraged her to return to school and to connect to her teacher identity as a volunteer teacher.

Framing Each Weaving: Violet Thread Asks "Who am I?"

One other contributor to the change in participants' stories to live by appeared with the change in landscapes. Like the feature of hope, this contributor became most apparent when the landscape changed from school to retirement. Each participant questioned who he or she was on the new landscape. Although the question was not openly stated in words that asked "Who am I now that I am no longer a teacher?" it

appeared in conversations as they tried to make sense of their changed identity. The question "Who am I?" caused them to not only reflect on who they had been before they retired, but to also think about who they were becoming on the new landscape. When they taught, they knew themselves and were known by others as teachers. When they retired and stepped off the school landscape, they were no longer teachers living a story of teaching. As they went through a process of redefining themselves, their identities changed (Leach & Chakiris, 1988). I represent this feature of the change in landscape with a violet thread that surrounds all other threads, including vertical warp and horizontal weft threads. This final thread frames each participant's weaving.

Frank's story to live by was influenced by the question "Who am I?" His identity as volunteer changed little but his story to live by as friend/advocate experienced a significant shift. He took steps to re-establish friendships so that his identity as friend took prominence over his identity as advocate. He became a friend who renewed friendships from his past, not an advocate who continued to speak for teachers. He continued to sympathize with teachers over dilemmas they faced in teaching but was not willing to go beyond being a good listener. His story to live by as teacher experienced significant change throughout the first six months of his retirement as he changed who he was on the new landscape. At the onset of retirement, he claimed his title as a retired teacher and refused to acknowledge any connection to his teacher identity. However, several months later, when circumstances in his life caused him to seek employment, he returned to the school landscape and reconnected with his identity as teacher. When he did step back onto the school landscape, he did not become the teacher he had been before he retired. Positive experiences at school permitted him to re-story himself. His teacher identity changed from a teacher who could not wait to give up his position on the landscape, to a substitute teacher who enjoyed interacting with teachers and students. Although he continued to be guarded and aware that things at school could change, he

was willing to identify himself as a teacher with a connection to his original teacher identity. "I'm a retired teacher and I substitute" (Conversation, May 19, 2001).

Lorraine did not have time to contemplate who she was when she first retired. Not until the summer ended was she able to reflect on who she had been and who she was at that time. Her story to live by as artist immediately came to the fore. In a similar way, her story to live by as learner gained prominence as the focus of her learning changed from investigating alternative forms of medication for family members to the pursuit of personal interests. It was her identity as teacher however that was most influenced by the question "Who am I?" Recognition of the change to her teacher identity was not immediate because she continued to speak as though she was still teaching. Even after six months of being retired, she spoke passionately about teaching and her identity as a teacher. In spite of the fact that she did not identify herself as a retired teacher, she became aware of the change to her teacher identity. She changed from a full time classroom teacher, to a teacher who was called on by students and teachers to provide assistance and expertise. Lorraine was a retired teacher and although she continued to connect to her past identity as a teacher, her teacher identity had changed because of how she was positioned on the school landscape. As a consultant, she was positioned differently on the school landscape. In response to the question, "Who am I?" she said, "I'm retired and I'm working on things that are important in my life" (Conversation, June 1, 2000).

Noreen's story to live by changed in response to the question "Who am I?" Her identity as friend/mentor/advocate changed when she became more involved as a friend than a mentor or advocate. The question "Who am I?" had a greater impact on her identity as organizer. Beyond the organization of a retired teachers' group, she knew she would continue to employ her organizational skills in the future. "I'm an organizer" (Conversation, October 1, 2001). She would not however, "assume a lot of responsibility for getting things done" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). Instead, she included others.

"I'm not going to do it all myself" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). Although she was somewhat uncertain about the future of her identity as organizer, she clearly stated her identity when the question "Who am I?" was posed by the change in landscapes. "I'm a retired teacher and I'm celebrating my retirement" (Conversation, August 8, 2001). Noreen celebrated the change to her teacher identity in retirement. She also expressed how significant the change to her story to live by as teacher was. "Teaching is our identity and when you quit, it is really hard to figure out who you are" (Conversation, June 1, 2001).

Completed Weavings

As each participant's story to live by was told, their stories revealed plotlines, plotlines that indicated identities. I represented the participants' identities, their stories to live by, with individual warp threads. In addition to the exposure of participants' stories to live by, contributions made by the landscape or by the change in landscape were also discovered. I represented contributing features of the landscape with horizontal and surrounding weft threads. As vertical warp threads that represented participants' identities combined with horizontal weft threads that represented contributions made by the landscape or change in landscape, a woven design was created. Each woven design captured a period of time in each participant's life as they experienced retiring from teaching. A completed design does not imply, however, that the threads held within the design are the only threads that represent that experience or that the threads in the woven design end. Instead, they act as a representation of each participant's story of retiring to show how stories to live by hold an "intimate connection" (Carr, 1986) to the landscape they are a part of. Completed weavings of Frank's, Lorraine's and Noreen's story of retiring from teaching appear in Figures 7-13, 7-14, and 7-15 respectively.

Figure 7-13 - Frank's Completed Weaving

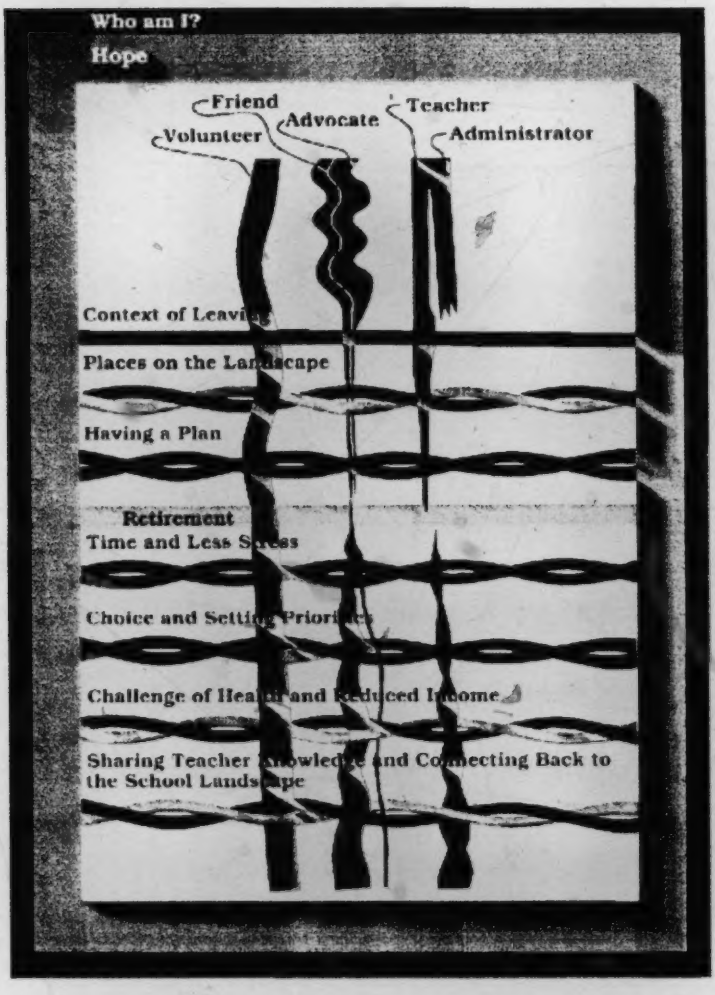


Figure 7-14 - Lorraine's Completed Weaving

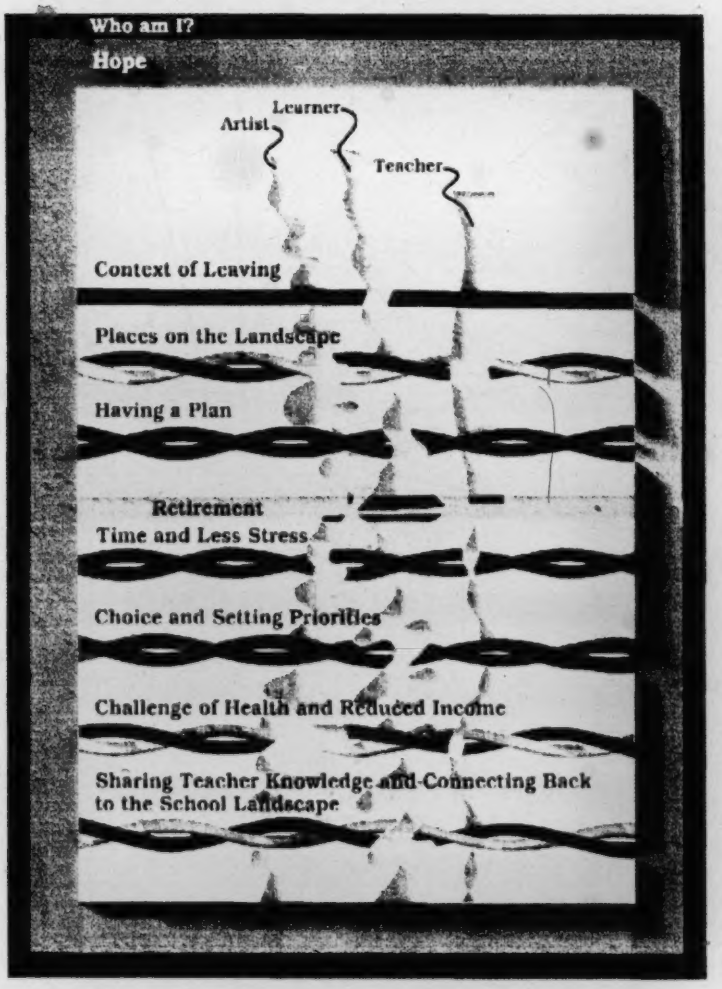
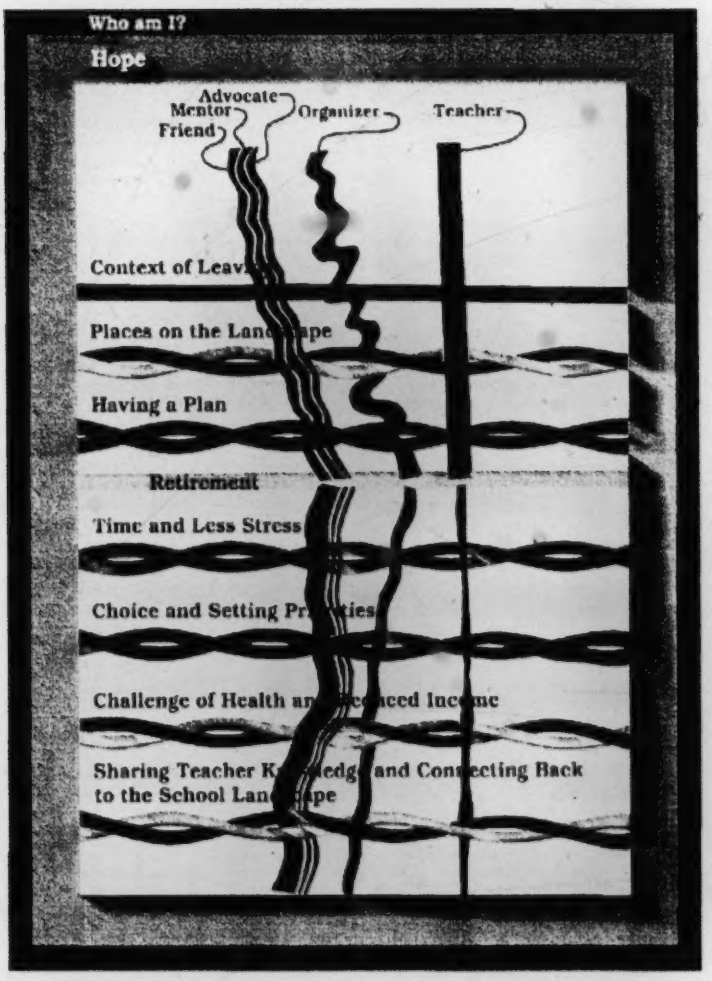


Figure 7-15 - Noreen's Completed Weaving



CHAPTER VIII: UNDERSTANDINGS REVEALED

As this narrative inquiry into the experience of retiring from teaching unfolded, I searched for meaning. I did not intend to answer questions but to carry on a search, a re-search. The inquiry revealed plotlines, stories to live by, plotlines of participants' identities. It uncovered features posed by two very different landscapes, the school landscape, called the professional knowledge landscape and the retirement landscape. The search for meaning revealed the impact each exposed feature of the landscape(s) had on the participants' stories to live by. This inquiry represents the experience of three participants and therefore does not propose generalizations about the impact a change in landscape has on all retiring teachers' stories to live. Instead, it honors the individual experience of these three retiring teachers through the stories they told.

The words of Barone and Eisner (1995) confirm my sense of purpose:

> Artistically grounded research furthers understanding and that enables a reader to notice what had not been seen before, to understand what had not been understood, to secure a firmer grasp and deeper appreciation of complex situations and contributes to the end to which educational research in general is committed. (p. 31)

What I Understand of the Experience of Retiring From Teaching

The process of doing this study has been a learning experience for me. This chapter reveals what I have come to understand about the experience of retiring from teaching. Understandings are presented in the order in which features of the landscape and their impact on the participant's identities were presented in the previous chapter.

The Context of Leaving Has an Impact

The context in which the participants retired had a definite impact on their experience of retiring from teaching. Given the complexity of teaching and the professional knowledge landscapes on which teachers teach, the context of a teacher's leaving may also be complex. The context of the participants' leaving was not driven by a lack of funding and a scheme to get rid of older experienced teachers because they rank higher on the pay scale than those with little or no experience (Marshall, 1998). The

context was not driven by a teacher shortage and the need to retain experienced teachers (Williams & Peltier, 1992). Neither was age part of their context of leaving. In spite of the fact that they could have retired at age fifty-five, they chose to continue to teach until they were close to age sixty, almost five years beyond the age when the majority of teachers retire. Their choice to teach beyond the minimum age requirement to receive a pension is congruent with the findings of a study conducted by Settersten (1998). In a random sample of retired adults, most respondents considered age as an irrelevant dimension for both men's and women's retirement and indicated that there was no serious consequence for retiring late.

What did influence their decision to retire, and therefore was part of the context of their leaving, was the stress of teaching. Frank indicated that he would have continued to teach if the stress at school had been less. Lorraine spoke of how she was somewhat resentful that she had to leave the profession when she did but was not willing to continue to endure the stress of teaching. Noreen revealed her thoughts about retiring and being older. She denounced any connection between being older and retiring from teaching when she explained that stress was forcing teachers, regardless of age, out of teaching.

In addition to the influence of stress, a significant part of the participants' context of leaving had to do with whether they felt valued, appreciated, heard and without pressure to leave. In a study conducted by Pearce (1993) on retired educators' attitudes towards their retirement, many respondents perceived that their former employing organization did not hold them in high regard. According to Bateson (1989), if one is able to move beyond a context of leaving that causes one to feel devalued, incompetent, without a voice or pressured to leave, then he or she may be able to retire with a feeling of confidence. Contrasts in the way the participants experienced this context of leaving confirmed its importance. Lorraine felt valued and appreciated by colleagues, her administration, students and parents of the students she taught. Her voice was heard and without any pressure to leave, she stepped into retirement with confidence. The context

surrounding Noreen's leaving was similar. At a retirement gathering held in her honor, she spoke of feeling valued and appreciated. As an advocate for teachers and herself, she knew her voice was heard. She had complete choice in the decision to retire and was able to leaving teaching with feelings of confidence. The context of Frank's leaving, however, made him feel de-valued, incompetent and that he had no voice. Although not directly pressured to retire, neither was he encouraged to stay. This negative context had a very different impact on his leaving. The context of his leaving destroyed his story to live by as teacher so that when he retired, he felt relief in knowing he was no longer a teacher. His move to retirement was not accompanied by feelings of confidence given a context that devalued him, was unappreciative, and stripped him of voice. According to Mitchell (1997), who examined the oral histories of retired teachers, when assumptions and beliefs are not acknowledged by colleagues, the absence of acknowledgement leads to critical attitudes that limit trust and prohibit meaningful collaboration. Morse, Dutka and Gray (1983) acknowledged the influence that treatment of older employees by employers has on an employee's decision to retire early, earlier than age sixty-five. The context surrounding Frank's leaving did not include acknowledgements from colleagues and in the absence of acknowledgements, he left not trusting or willing to engage in further collaborations.

The participants' contrasting experiences helped me to understand the importance of a context that does not impose high levels of stress but offers retiring teachers the opportunity to feel valued, appreciated, heard and without pressure to leave. A survey conducted by the Canadian Education Association (1988) confirmed the importance of a context that honors open and frank communications among school board administrators, trustees and teachers as a means to enhance human relations and staff morale.

Participants Stay Connected to One Place on the School Landscape

Before they retired, Lorraine and Noreen spoke of maintaining a connection to the school landscape. Lorraine expressed an interest in returning to school and began to

accept offers to reconnect to the school landscape when summer ended. Noreen planned to maintain a connection to school and arranged a contact before she retired. When school started in the fall, she was in the classroom assisting students during the first week of school. Frank, on the other hand, refused to give any thought to returning to school before he retired but found himself drawn back to school when financial problems were posed. Although financial relief was the main reason he chose to become a substitute teacher, connecting back to school provided an opportunity to gain employment in a career he was most familiar with and to "recapture" the part of his sense of self that was a teacher.

Participants continued to talk of school and their connection to the school landscape after they retired. After Frank returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher, he was able to put unpleasant and frustrating memories of past experience in the classroom behind and to make a connection between his new teaching experience in the in-classroom place with positive teaching experiences at the beginning of his career. Lorraine spoke passionately about her teaching approach and willingness to provide expertise to teachers who were interested in learning from her. Conversations with Noreen after she retired also gave a clear indication that she would continue to teach. "Teaching was a passion and continues to be" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). Perhaps the participants' willingness to connect was partially driven by a desire to re-enter the in-classroom place, a "place where teachers teach and where curriculum is made, at least the curriculum that matters as far as students are concerned" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 12).

Although the participants were willing to make a connection back to the school landscape and the in-classroom place, they set limits on their commitments. They understood from past experience how demands at school caused stress in their lives and they were not prepared to maintain a connection to school if demands increased or stress was involved. Consequently, they were willing to connect back only to the in-classroom

place and would guard against involvement with the out-or-classroom place. The impact of demands from the out-of-classroom place devastated Frank. For several months after he retired, he refused to engage in any talk of school. Eventually, he did return to the school landscape but would not allow the out-of-classroom place to infringe on his time at school. Although Lorraine felt respect from colleagues, administrators and others who were part of the out-of-classroom place, she recognized the impact that demands from the out-of-classroom place had had on her life. When she retired, she found great relief in the freedom that came from not having to deal with the prescriptive nature of the out-of-classroom place. Noreen spoke of challenge at school that came from outside the classroom. When she retired, she was willing to reconnect to the classroom and found relief in knowing that the out-of-classroom place would no longer have an impact on her experience at school.

The Significance of Having a Plan

The ease with which the participants adjusted to the change from being on the landscape to off the landscape varied. Perhaps the reason why some were better able to deal with the change in landscapes came from having a plan for retirement. Halloran (1985) described the importance of one's job to one's self-image and suggests that one promote alternative aspects of life, associate with people outside of his or her job area and develop and maintain outside interests in order to deal with a possible retirement identity crisis. Feingold (1978) heavily stressed the importance of pre-retirement planning in order to deal with the psychological strain from a loss of career identity. According to Kompf (1991), retirement is viewed by many as an event falling somewhere between earned reward and banishment. He explains how a retiree who views professional withdrawal as a reward may have had in place a system of readiness. Conversely, retirement, which is anticipated negatively or as banishment, may indicate a lack of construct readiness for such an event. According to Lo and Brown (1999), planning for retirement is associated with successful adaptation. The possibility of

maintaining life satisfaction, self-esteem and a locus of control hinges on retirement preparation (Abel & Hayslip, 1987). Fox (1997) acknowledged the importance of planning for retirement earlier in life in order to facilitate success in retirement and adjustment to aging. The importance of having a plan was also confirmed by the results of a survey conducted by Milletti (1987) of 1500 retired persons. Results indicated that many respondents regretted not having a plan for retirement.

Although the participants did not speak of experiencing an "identity crisis" or a loss of self-esteem when they retired, Lorraine and Noreen did have a plan for retirement and each took steps to set their plans into action. Frank, on the other hand, did not have a definite plan in place for retirement. Perhaps Lorraine and Noreen were able to adjust to the new landscape with greater ease than if they had not planned ways to maintain a connection to their original stories to live by. Perhaps the ease with which Frank adjusted to the new landscape was diminished because he did not have a plan to maintain or replace the connection to his story to live by.

In addition to facilitating their adjustment to the new landscape of retirement, having a plan for retirement may have assisted each participant to answer a question they were repeatedly asked. As the time to retire grew near, participants spoke of being asked about what they were going to do when they retired. Responses to the question varied. Lorraine was sure of what she was going to do when she retired and spoke with confidence about those plans. Noreen would carry out plans she made well in advance of the event. Frank had some plans in place but was uncertain of what would replace his teaching career when he retired. Perhaps the question of "What are you going to do when you retire?" was easier to answer if the participant had established plans in place. On the other hand, if plans were not established or if no new plans were envisioned, participants may have had a more difficult time answering the question.

The Availability of Time in Retirement

Before the participants retired, they did not speak of retirement in terms of the time it would offer. They were so caught up in the world of teaching, the only image they had was of experiencing a world with less stress. After they retired, however, time became a treasured addition to their lives. They did not miss the intensity of school and did not therefore experience the dilemma of being without a world and having too much unstructured time. Although they returned to the school landscape, their commitment to that world was limited in order to safeguard their unstructured time. The possibility of empty days in retirement and concern over learning to live with unstructured time was not part of the participants' experience. They did not experience the "strict bifurcation" (Heilbrun, 1997) between world and time.

One reason for the absence of concern over having "sufficient time and no world" (Heilbrun, 1997, p. 43) may be attributed to the fact that each participant not only maintained a connection to the world of school but also stayed involved in different worlds, worlds outside of teaching. Halloran (1985) stresses the importance of promoting alternative aspects of one's life, associating with people outside of one's job arena and developing and maintaining outside interests. The addition of time contributed to greater involvement in their other worlds and was a change the participants recognized and valued. Time in retirement gave Frank the freedom of choice, choice to engage in other worlds and therefore maintain a connection to the plotlines of his story to live by. He had choice in the time he would spend volunteering, visiting with friends, and substitute teaching. Time set Lorraine free to pursue interests in art and learning and to return to the school landscape as a consultant and expert. Noreen recognized the difference in availability of time before and after she retired and welcomed unstructured time in retirement to spend time with friends, organize activities and, volunteer at school. Time in retirement was not a burden for the participants. Time provided them with the

opportunity not only to explore new worlds but also to maintain a connection to their stories to live by.

A Reduction in Stress

The participants did not speak of their future in retirement in terms of images of the dominant story. Instead, their expectations for the future were connected to the life they lived before they retired. They did not imagine that their lives would be free from financial concerns and previous financial commitments. They did not speak of images of world travel. Concern over having the freedom to decide when to retire was not an image they spoke of nor was a vision of freedom from health concerns as advertised in magazines and on commercials a part of their story. Only one image of the dominant story of retiring was described in conversations before the participants retired. As they storied themselves into the future, they each spoke of how the stress of teaching interfered with their willingness to continue to teach.

The image of freedom from job-related stress appealed to them as they made the decision to retire. Not only was the image of a reduction in levels of stress influential in their decision to retire, it was something they hoped retirement would offer. Frank spoke of how he looked forward to retirement and explained, "I have five good years of teaching left in me yet and I feel healthy enough that I could survive, but I know I can't" (Conversation, April 20, 2000). He planned to continue to volunteer and reconnect with friends but was not willing to teach because of the stress he experienced on the school landscape. Even when he returned to school, as a substitute teacher, he refused to accept assignments he knew would cause stress. Lorraine indicated that she was "not quitting because I have great plans for retirement. Instead, I look forward to it as an escape" (Conversation, June 4, 2000). She did plan to continue to pursue interests in art and learning and to stay connected to school but looked forward to a reduction in stress. Noreen explained that "when you teach, your life goes on hold and you give up a lot. Teaching is so intense and you have to hold it all together" (Conversation, January 31,

2001). She described feelings of "relief not sadness" (Conversation, June 30, 2001) as she imagined how retirement would offer her a life without job-related stress.

Retirement Offers Choice, Choice Means Setting Priorities

Opportunities to exercise choice in retirement appealed to all three participants. Choice in retirement may encourage a teacher to form an internal locus of control and self-efficacy. According to Carter and Cook (1995), retiring teachers who have an locus of control and self-efficacy are able to engage in proactive strategies for mastering role changes inherent in retirement transition. Choice was a feature of the changed landscape that offered a sense of freedom and endless possibilities to the participants. Frank had choice in where to volunteer, when to spend time with friends and whether to accept teaching assignments. Lorraine had choice in art projects, new learning and involvement at school. Noreen had choice in spending time with friends, organizing activities for others or volunteering at school. Choice also caused the participants to think about what was important in their lives and then to set priorities. Re-establishing and maintaining relationships with others stood out as the common priority. The participants informed me of the reward of having choice in retirement. They also help me to understand that choice not only involves the setting of priorities but also offers the opportunity to engage in the process of setting priorities.

Retiring and Health Concerns

Maintaining a state of good health in retirement could be shaken if unforeseen health problems arise. According to Myers (1990), length of life depends on many factors, the most significant of which is heredity. A family history of serious health concerns could pose a reality check for retiring teachers and their wish for longevity.

The participants did not speak of health in retirement in terms of an image of the dominant story. They did not envision retirement as a time free from serious health concerns. Instead, their view of health in retirement came from life experiences of watching others around them and understanding the vulnerability of one's physical

health. They acknowledged the importance of leaving teaching while they were healthy enough to enjoy retirement. When they retired, they spoke of relief in knowing they had left teaching before health concerns appeared but also indicated that health concerns were a looming reality. Frank understood the impact teaching had on his life and before he retired, he spoke of his unwillingness to take a risk in continuing to teach. "I will not risk my health to stay, my health is more important that that" (Conversation, April 20, 2000). Lorraine not only experienced a health scare while teaching but knew from losing her sister to cancer how "you have to make every day a good one in some way, because you never know" (Conversation, September 10, 2000). Noreen explained how "your health dictates how things will go because you don't always know what is around the corner" (Conversation, March 28, 2001). Good health in retirement was an image each participant envisioned. They understood, however, that the image may not be sustained in retirement if unforeseen health problems surfaced.

Retiring and Financial Concerns

Policy on teacher pensions states that a full service teacher's pension should be sufficient to allow a teacher to live his or her live in dignity and in a manner that approximates that to which he or she is accustomed. Although this statement offers encouragement to a retiring teacher who is unsure of the impact a reduction in income will have, it does not insure that a teacher's income in retirement will be sufficient. According to Mulanaphy (1981), who conducted a survey of 2, 260 older participants of the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association College Retirement Equities, aged 59-69, respondents were most concerned about their financial circumstances in regards to their future retirement. A reduction in income did have an impact on the quality of each participant's retirement life. The extent of impact a reduced income had on his or her life in retirement, however, varied. Frank retired having accumulated twenty years of pensionable service, approximately ten to fifteen years less than most retirees. This dilemma caused him great concern before he retired and continued to be problematic in

the months after he retired until he began substitute teaching. Although an increase in income helped to alleviate some concern over having enough money to live on, he knew he would have to deal with money concerns throughout his retirement years. Lorraine and Noreen were each able to accumulate over thirty years of service and did receive unreduced pensions. However, in spite of the fact that they were less anxious about living with reduced income in retirement, they both spoke of how their lives were impacted by less income. Lorraine guarded the amount of money she spent. "I'm not spending a lot of money" (Conversation, January 19, 2000). Noreen knew from experience of "times when you had less and had to decide what was important and where money should be spent" (Conversation, September 7, 2001). A reduction in income was a challenge but a challenge she could cope with.

Teacher Knowledge and Making Sense of Retiring

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) refer to teacher knowledge as personal practical knowledge. Making sense of a present experience by drawing on past experience and thinking about a future plan was a way of knowing each participant developed and used throughout his or her teaching career. Perhaps their teacher knowledge assisted them in making sense of the experience of retiring. In a longitudinal study investigating the retirement process, Jonsson, Kielhofner and Borell (1997) indicated that people anticipate retirement through narratives in which they link together past, present and future. Understanding this narrative process of interpreting, anticipating and making choice is important for understanding how people adapt to life change, the change to retirement. As Frank tried to make sense of challenges he faced when he retired, he recalled past experiences of dealing with demands at school and was encouraged to know that he could also deal with demands in retirement. Lorraine spoke confidently about being able to take experience from the past with her as she journeyed to the next horizon in retirement. Noreen spoke of how she had learned to maintain balance in her life when she taught and would use that knowledge as she endeavored to maintain balance in her life in retirement.

Teachers' personal practical knowledge may have proved useful as each participant tried to make sense of his or her experience of retiring from teaching.

Teacher Knowledge Finds Expression in Retirement

Each participant spent years developing his or her teacher knowledge. After they retired, they found ways to express that knowledge on school landscapes. One indication of their interest in finding ways to express and share teacher knowledge was the difficulty they had in "letting go" of materials they used when they taught. Teaching materials were expressions of their teacher knowledge. Their reluctance to give away or discard teaching materials was indicative of their reluctance to let go of materials that were an expression of their teacher knowledge. Lorraine was not willing to give away or sell teaching material that might someday prove useful. She kept art materials, books she treasured and teaching units she had developed. Noreen had a garage sale but would not consider selling or giving away the "bibles," the special materials, she knew worked with students. Frank gave away a significant amount of his teaching materials before he retired, but kept some for his wife who was also a teacher. Although he spoke of how he would not need teaching materials in retirement and had no intentions of finding expression for his teacher knowledge, his teacher knowledge did eventually find expression. Positive experiences at school encouraged him to use his teacher knowledge and to accept teaching assignments that were unfamiliar to him. Finding opportunities to express teacher knowledge in retirement became part of the participants' changed stories to live by.

A Hopeful Outlook

The participants experienced challenge on the school landscape and were aware of the possibility of looming challenge in retirement. In spite of concerns over possible challenge in retirement, they continually looked for ways to turn challenges into opportunities for growth. This ability to search out answers to problems proved useful when they taught and would continue to assist them in retirement. Certainly, not every

concern was viewed with optimism when problems overwhelmed and left them feeling defeated and wondering how to survive. However, in spite of the magnitude of problems in their lives, they continued to search for hope. Their conveyance of hope fits with Ben-Peretz's (1995) findings. In a study of the stories that retired teachers tell, Ben-Peretz (1995) discovered that many of the stories retired teachers told conveyed a strong feeling of hope. Frank turned to the Serenity Prayer whenever life events overwhelmed and made a conscious effort to "think about teaching in a more positive way and have the right attitude" (Conversation, October 14, 2000). Lorraine explained how she would take her experiences with her as she journeyed towards new horizons. She found hope in knowing that she would be able to "make it to the next hill" because she chose to view uncertainty and challenge, not as something negative but as something exciting. Noreen spoke enthusiastically about how she looked at retirement as a wonderful opportunity to find herself again. Excitement and hope were the essence of her talk as she described her life in retirement and looked forward to the future.

Retiring and Waking Up to One's Identity

As conversations with participants unfolded and stories were told, plotlines that represent identities appeared. Although the participants were aware of interests and activities in their lives, they did not always make the connection between those interests and their identities. In other words, they did not always describe themselves in terms of their identities. Lorraine knew she was a learner and did refer to herself as such, but spoke of her other identities only in conversation and only when asked to confirm those identities. Frank was a volunteer, friend/advocate and teacher but did not label those identities. Similarly, Noreen's told stories of being an organizer but did not speak of herself as a friend/mentor/advocate or teacher.

Although the telling of stories of retiring from teaching provided an opportunity for the participants to become more aware of their identities, not until the landscape changed did they "wake up" to who they had been and who they were becoming. Kompf

(1991) suggests that actual retirement poses a forced adaptation to new circumstances which may be facilitated beneficially by a process of life review. The life review involves reflection, catharsis and reconstruction which then leads to self-assessment and a "shift in focus towards self-as-retired-person" (p. 487). The change in landscapes caused each participant to reflect on his or her story to live by, to recognize multiple threads of identity and, to understand how particular threads formed his or her story to live by. At the same time, the change in landscapes enabled each participant to understand how threads that were part of his or her story to live by before he or she retired, continued to exist after he or she retired and, to recognize how his or her multiple threads, their identities, had changed and continued to change after retirement.

The Part Summer Plays

I was surprised by the position the summer months played in this process of awakening to "Who am I?" The landscape change was abrupt when participants stepped off the school landscape to the retirement landscape at the end of June but in spite of this abrupt change, recognition of the change in identities was not immediate or clear. Each participant acknowledged the end of his or her career on the last day of school but became most aware of the fact that they were retired from teaching after the summer months passed. Frank's summer resembled those of the past and he did not feel the full impact of being retired until familiar routines of the summer were complete. Lorraine's summer was not like any other in that she experienced a family crisis. In spite of events that caused her summer to differ from summers of the past, it was not until September that she realized she was retired. The first summer after Noreen retired was hectic as she continued to engage in numerous social activities. Not until the hectic pace of the summer ended did she acknowledge that she was retired. Only after the summer months passed did each participant recognize the familiar connection between who he or she was before retirement and who he or she was after the move to retirement. Only when the summer ended did each participant recognize the change to his or her identity.

The Continuation of Identities in Retirement

The reappearance of identity threads in retirement seemed to relate to the strength of plotlines of stories to live by before each participant retired. If an identity thread maintained a wide width up until the time of retirement, the probability of that thread reappearing in retirement was stronger than if the thread narrowed or disappeared at the time of retirement. In other words, identity threads that appeared secure and strong before retirement, became established threads in retirement. Identity threads that narrowed or disappeared did not reappear as strong threads in retirement but as threads that changed significantly.

One identity thread appeared to change more than any other. Each participant's teacher identity thread revealed significant change. The change in landscape caused the participants to ask the question "Who am I now that I am no longer a teacher?" When they taught, they knew themselves and were known by others as teachers. When they retired and stepped off the school landscape, they were no longer teachers living a story of teaching. In spite of significant change to their teacher identity, however, their willingness to return to the school landscape gave a clear indication of how that identity stayed the same. Kompf (1991) confirmed the existence of teacher identity in retirement when he said, "A teacher does not cease to perceive himself or herself as a teacher because he or she retires from the profession" (p. 487). Reitzes, Mutran and Fernandez (1996) acknowledged the connection between identity before and after one retires. Their findings indicate that pre-retirement self and identity factors continue to influence post-retirement self-esteem. According to Super (1969), one may experience a severe discontinuity in both work role and self-concept when retirement occurs. However, if some continuity can be maintained, one's self-concept is less severely affected.

Some of Frank's identity threads narrowed before retirement and did not therefore provide a strong base for the re-establishment of those threads after he retired. His identity as a friend/advocate almost disappeared and even though he did re-establish

friendships, he did not pursue activities as an advocate for others. Similarly, his teacher identity thread narrowed significantly in the last ten years of his career and then disappeared from sight when he changed landscapes. Several months later, his teacher identity thread reappeared when he realized he could put his teacher knowledge to use and it was safe to once again bring his teacher identity to the fore. It did not, however, reappear as a strong wide thread. The multiple threads of Lorraine's identity changed after she retired but continued to exist because they had been strong, wide threads before retirement. Her teacher thread changed significantly but re-established itself after she retired because of the strong connection it had to her identity as teacher before she retired. Noreen's identity also changed after she retired but continued to connect to her story to live by before she retired. Although her teacher identity changed, the likelihood of its re-establishment in retirement and the ease in which it reappeared could be attributed to the prominence of that identity thread before she retired.

Living a Changed Identity on the School Landscape

The participants chose to reconnect to the school landscape after they retired. When they returned to school, however, they began to restory their lives as teachers. Frank reconnected to school as a substitute teacher. Positive experiences encouraged him to maintain a connection between his new experience and the many positive teaching experiences he had in the first ten years of his career. Lorraine stepped back onto the school landscape as an expert and consultant who would continue to work with teachers but in a different way. Noreen returned to school as a volunteer teacher. Each participant's teacher identity changed when they left teaching to retire and again when they connected back to the school landscape.

Being Positioned Differently Shapes Stories to Live By

The participants returned to the landscape, not as the teachers they had been before they retired but as teachers who had changed. The change in their identities came from the changed landscape and from how they were positioned on the school landscape

when they reconnected to it. As they stepped back onto the school landscape into a different position, they were also treated differently. Frank returned as a substitute teacher and had choice in how much time he would spend and in what assignments he would accept at school. Teachers and administrators welcomed him whenever he entered their schools. Lorraine returned as a consultant when requests were made of her expertise. Noreen returned as a volunteer teacher to offer assistance to students and teachers. The school landscape treated the participants differently when they stepped back on.

Identity and Landscape Have an Intimate Connection

From the moment I began listening to stories, stories of teaching and stories of retiring, I sensed a connection between the storyteller and the landscape they were a part of. It was not possible to separate the two. As I tried to make sense of the interplay between the storyteller's identity and the landscape on which he or she dwells, I turned to Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) work. They explain that "teachers who live their lives on the professional knowledge landscape shape the landscape over time and the landscape shapes them" (p. 28). Clearly, one's sense of identity, confidence and self-worth as a teacher is secured or not by the intimacy of the matrix of relationship on the professional knowledge landscape, where one's story to live by, one's identity and the landscape interplay (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). In other words, one's sense of identity is ultimately linked with the surrounding terrain, to the landscape that plays a significant role in a story and is part of oneself (Silko, 1996).

Listening to the participants' experiences of retiring from teaching helped me to understand the connection between identity and landscape and how a change in landscapes influences one's story to live by, one's identity. My understanding of the connection between identity and landscape was enriched when the participants' stories were laid side by side. This action exposed features of the landscape(s) that contributed to

the shift or change in the participants' identities. Fourteen landscape features were exposed as repeating contributors to the change in identities.

A Summary of Understandings

Studying the narratives of experiences of three teachers has provided me with new understandings about the experience of retiring from teaching. I gained an understanding of how the context of leaving has an impact on a retiring teacher. I see how connecting to the in-classroom place on the school landscape offers retiring teachers an opportunity to reconnect to their teacher identity. I understand the importance of having a plan for retirement as well as the significance of maintaining interests outside of teaching. I see how retirement offers time enough to pursue those interests. A reduction in levels of stress is part of the retiring experience, as is the availability of choice and the opportunity to set priorities. I understand that health and money concerns are challenges that may appear with the change in landscapes but that there is hope in one's ability to view challenge as an opportunity to grow. I understand how teacher knowledge may offer a way to make sense of the experience of retiring and how that knowledge may be expressed when one connects back to the school landscape in retirement. I now realize how connected one's identity is to the landscape he or she is part of and how identity changes when the landscape changes.

I have learned from listening to the stories of retiring. Understandings about the experience have also left me with wonders about my own retirement. The following chapter will pose new wonders as I look back on what I have learned and forward to what the future may present as I too retire from teaching.

CHAPTER IX: A REFLECTIVE TURN, A FORWARD GLANCE

Now that stories of retiring from teaching have been told, I look back over the past four years and know that stories to live by and the inquiry into those stories have changed my life. At the same time, stories to live by, as told and retold, have left me with wonders about the future. In this final chapter, I look back to reflect on my own learning path and then ahead to re-imagine the future.

A Reflective Turn

My Growing Understanding of Narrative Inquiry

I was introduced to narrative inquiry as a research methodology approximately six years ago when I attended a summer class at the University of Alberta. As the instructors offered space for voice to be heard and encouraged the telling of stories of experience, I began to wake up to the power of story. I began to understand that my own story and way of knowing was credible.

During the months and years that followed, I tried to further my understanding of narrative inquiry by taking classes, reading books and talking with others. Although efforts to engage in the learning of narrative inquiry allowed me to make greater sense of it, my understanding of narrative inquiry changed significantly as I became immersed in the process. Certainly, I had read about and discussed "being in the field" for example and, the importance of the research relationship. I appreciated the value of story and knew about the importance of voice. I did not really understand, however, what happens as an inquiry unfolds. Only as I worked through the inquiry did my understanding of narrative inquiry deepen.

The Importance of Telling Stories

As stories of the experience of retiring from teaching were told, I learned of the importance of telling stories. Shared conversations provided moments of insight which Bateson (1994) refers to as "that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by

telling them to speak to one another" (p. 14). The telling of stories opened space for the participants to share emotions, emotions that at times did not fit the dominant story of retiring from teaching. According to Heilbrun (1988), to ignore their emotions would be less than honest. As the participants told their stories, they did express anger and in doing so, were permitted to openly admit the desire for power and control in their lives. Heilbrun (1988) explains that if the expression of anger is not permitted or even recognized within oneself, the one is, by simple extension, refused both power and control.

Anger over having to leave the teaching profession because of demands at school and the stress involved in carrying out those demands was an emotion the participants shared in the telling of stories. When each one listened to his or her stories as told in Chapters IV, V and VI, a different emotion, an emotion triggered by memories of their last months of teaching appeared. As Frank and I read his story together, he indicated how relieved he was that he had made the decision to retire when he did. However, reading his own words brought back memories of the devastation he experienced at school before he retired. As he read, he wept. Tears of relief combined with tears of pain as he recalled how hurtful his last six months at school had been. His silenced voice found expression as he cried tears over memories of his experience at school. As Lorraine read her story, she stopped to reflect. She recalled how hectic her life had been at school and how the pace intensified towards the end of the year. Memories of being exhausted were awakened as she thought about how she tried to deal with illness of family members. Memories of trying to cope with intensified year end responsibilities at school triggered feelings of relief in knowing that her life was no longer impacted by the school landscape and that she had made the right decision in choosing to retire. Listening to her own words brought mixed emotions for Noreen. As she recalled fond memories of relationships she shared with teachers and students, she expressed feelings of loss. At the

same time, she felt relief in knowing that she would no longer have to deal with stress at school.

The telling of stories also provides an opportunity for the retiring teacher to think about his or her identity and the threads that weave together to form that identity. Recognition of identity threads could then provide a space for a retiring teacher to think about ways to sustain those threads in retirement. According to Ben-Peretz (1995), a most important outcome of teachers' shared discourse is its impact on their sense of professional identity. Exposure of each participant's identity threads has caused me to think about my own identity and how I will sustain that identity in retirement.

Learning from Listening to Stories Others Tell

My understanding of the importance of story telling is linked to the importance of being a listener. As I listened to the participants' stories of retiring, I got a sense of living in multiple positions and this experience offered assistance as I thought of my own retirement. Their stories enabled me to travel to their worlds where according to Lugones (1987, p. 8):

> We [were] fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we [were] not intelligible, we [did] not make sense, we [were] not solid, visible, integrated; we [were] lacking. So traveling to each other's "world"…enable[d] us to be….

Their stories formed the images through which I viewed their experiences. Images in their stories appeared vivid and allowed me to move to a greater understanding of their positions as I moved out and beyond my own story to live by, and into theirs. Traveling to their worlds, through their stories, not only enabled me to learn more of the context in which they found themselves as they retired, it also allowed me to learn more about myself. The images they presented through their stories may shape the way in which I will position myself on the retirement landscape and the story I will live there. As I laid my story along side their stories and awoke to how their stories of retiring deviated from the dominant one, I acknowledged that my story of retiring could be in conflict with the

dominant one being scripted around me. Clearly, there is a need to recognize important details that must be included in the dominant story of retiring so that competing stories—stories different from the dominant one—are heard (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

The Importance of Developing a Trusting Research Relationship

Embedded within the telling of and the listening to stories of retiring, was an opportunity to gain an understanding of the importance of developing trusting relationships with the participants. Trusting relationships, which are vital to what is achieved in the research process, existed between the research participants and myself (Noddings, 1991) and encouraged both the listening to and telling of, stories. Involvement in trusted relationships allowed me to hear stories that went beyond "light-hearted" comments about a "wonderful life" in retirement. The relationships I shared with participants lasted throughout the year we met and provided a base for open conversation throughout that time, especially when participants were asked to respond to the interim research texts. Stories told in conversations that were encouraged by relational trust offered new insights about the complexity of the experience of retiring from teaching.

Understanding Identity

As stories of experience were told, I gained an understanding of identity and how one's identity is formed. Each participant's story of retiring from teaching spoke of who he or she was before retirement and who he or she was after retirement. Carr's (1986) description of the discovery or rediscovery of one's story that involves "picking up the threads, reminding ourselves where we stand, where we have been and where we are going" (p. 168) provided me with a way of thinking about identity. He helped me to understand how different plotlines of stories to live by can be seen as threads that intertwine like fibers in a rope to weave the stories together and form one's identity. My identity is my story to live by and is composed of different identity threads that weave

together to say who I am. Listening to participants' stories causes me to think about the threads of my own identity. Living alongside these three participants causes me to think about how my identity will change when I retire.

A Forward Glance

Having spent over a year engaged in conversation with each participant, I emerge from this inquiry with increased insight and understanding of their experience of retiring. Understanding the experiences of the participants serves to heighten my awareness about untold stories of retiring. It is clear to me that there are as many stories of retiring from teaching as there are teachers retiring. My intention for engaging in this narrative inquiry was to understand the participants' stories but also to understand how the stories the participants told could shape new, alternative stories of retiring from teaching. In the following sections of this chapter, I share wonders about the future, wonders that may offer alternatives to teachers as they retire.

Change in the School Landscape

Before each participant retired, they identified challenges in teaching. Challenges were described in terms of how teaching had changed. Perhaps the school landscape had changed over the span of their teaching careers. Perhaps the school landscape they stepped onto when they began to teach had changed and was very different from the one they stepped off when they retired. On the other hand, maybe the landscape had not changed significantly but only appeared to have changed given the length of time each participant taught. In other words, change at school may have appeared insignificant when viewed from a historical perspective.

The participants' descriptions of how the landscape changed caused me to look at my own school landscape and to reflect back on the beginning years of my career. When I question what has changed, I am able to recognize particular areas of change. For example, the approach to teaching has taken many different turns and continues to change

as new information on student learning is discovered. However, I also understand that some parts of the landscape have stayed the same. The relationship I share with students for example is as strong today as it was thirty years ago. Perhaps some things about the landscape have changed while others have not. Perhaps, I recognize change because I too have changed. I am not the same teacher I was at the beginning of my career. In other words, maybe the landscape has not changed significantly but is viewed differently because I have changed and my perceptions of the landscape have changed. Perhaps I am unable to recognize particular changes in the landscape because I have become part of the parade (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In day to day life on the school landscape, I may not have attended to, or noticed, change. Maybe I have become numb to change because it takes place slowly, piece by piece. I wonder if the landscape has in fact changed and if so, to what extent.

Stress at School and its Impact on a Teacher's Decision to Retire

Stress at school had a direct bearing on each participant's decision to retire. They were unwilling to continue to deal with stress and the impact it was having on their lives. I am left wondering how different their lives would have been if stress at school had been reduced. I wonder what could be done to reduce stress at school. As I think about retiring, I wonder what impact stress will have on my decision to retire. Will stress be the deciding factor in my decision to leave? Will retirement provide an escape from stress? Will I feel robbed of a career that would have continued if stress had been bearable or, will I retire thinking that retirement is a just reward for a life lived?

The Context of Leaving

Stress was a significant part of the context in which the participants retired and played a major role in their decision to retire. Another part of the context that surrounded the participants' leaving involved a show of respect and care from others. Noddings (1986) emphasizes the importance of an ethic of caring for students and causes me to think about the importance of an ethic of caring for teachers when they retire. The void

that is produced as a result of not being part of a caring community may have been felt throughout one's career but may be particularly difficult to deal with if that caring community is absent when a teacher retires. Perhaps if an ethic of caring is present at the time a teacher retires, that teacher could leave with feelings of satisfaction in the knowing that he or she was valued by others and not therefore have to deal with the void caused by a community that did not care. As I think about my own move to retirement, I wonder what the context of my leaving will pose. I only hope that I am able to leave knowing that others valued my contributions and cared about me. However, if the context of my leaving does not offer an ethic of care, I know I will leave feeling as though my life as a teacher meant little to others. I wonder what change is necessary to create a context that celebrates retiring from teaching.

Creating Spaces for Teachers to Tell Stories

I have heard three stories of the experience of retiring from teaching and have learned from their telling. As I thought about what I have come to understand about the experience of retiring from teaching, I was drawn back to the participants. I wanted to hear what they had to say about being part of the inquiry and what they had learned from the telling of stories.

I met with Frank in May 2002, almost two years after he retired. When I asked him what he had to say about being part of the inquiry, he explained how talking with me helped him through a very difficult time. In the months before and after he retired, he felt great pressure from school and was thankful to have someone he could talk to.

> I found that I could say what I wanted to you and could be open and honest about what I was experiencing. You respected my feelings, were easy to talk to and in looking back, I can see no downside to being involved in the research. (Conversation, May 20, 2002)

Frank then spoke of how "our conversations acted like a catalyst" in enabling him to deal with an unresolved issue from the past.

> Several months ago, I was volunteering with a teachers' group and noticed that the vice principal who was involved in getting me out of administration was in attendance. I walked over to her, gave her a hug and asked how she was doing. We chatted briefly and then I walked away. I can't tell you how relieved I felt to have finally put the issue I had with her to rest. The conversations we shared gave me the courage to make that move. (Conversation, May 20, 2002)

Frank valued the research relationship he and I developed. In reflection of that relationship and of being able to tell his story, he was hopeful that his story would help other teachers.

Lorraine explained how being part of the inquiry allowed her to talk about private and sensitive issues. The research relationship permitted her to express what she felt and was experiencing at the time. "I was much closer to being a participant, which is so important when you are trying to go beyond the surface and to get to what people really experience" (Conversation, May 17, 2002). She spoke of how interested she was in being involved in the inquiry and of how she was "anxious to hear what the other participants had to say about their experience of retiring from teaching" (Conversation, May 17, 2002).

Noreen spoke of how conversations we shared helped to validate her educational beliefs. She appreciated the continuity in our conversations in that she was able to tell her story of retiring both before and after she left teaching. "The continuity of being able to talk with you for this length of time has been so worthwhile" (Conversation, May 23, 2002). She also indicated how relieved she was to know that her expression of concerns was not judged.

The participants confirmed the importance of telling stories. Their stories caused me to think about other retiring teachers and to realize that there are many untold stories. I want to hear other stories. Telling stories could provide an opportunity for a retiring teacher's voice to be heard. Shared stories within safe places on the landscape would permit uncertainties about this new beginning to be voiced (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995

p. 62). When voices are unconditionally heard, a seeding ground is established for stories that may lead to educational change. Stories told of retiring from teaching could provide increased awareness of this important event in a teacher's life. Stories told of lived experience that are different than the dominant story of retiring may signal the importance of telling stories in a new way. I wonder where spaces can be created for the telling of retiring teachers' stories. I wonder how I can be involved in creating that space.

Reconnecting to School

Each participant returned to the school landscape after he or she retired. Although they returned for different reasons, reconnecting to school provided them with an opportunity to share and express their teacher knowledge and re-establish relationships with students. Their willingness to return to school encourages me to think about reconnecting to school when I retire. As I contemplate this connection, I wonder how I will be positioned on the school landscape when I return to school. I wonder what options will be available to me when I reconnect to school and what other opportunities could be created.

Teachers spend years refining and perfecting their knowledge. I wonder how this valuable resource could be shared with others on the professional knowledge landscape. Perhaps a changed context could provide one solution. The teaching population in Alberta is aging. Many teachers are retiring and many more will retire in the coming decade. School systems would benefit therefore from the extensive knowledge and experience retired teachers could bring to school landscapes. Perhaps this untapped resource could provide solutions to problems that plague education. I wonder about other solutions.

Restorying Teacher Identity

After the participants retired, they picked up the multiple threads of their identities. The thread that had been part of their lives for twenty to thirty plus years, their teacher identity, found expression when they returned to the school landscape after they

retired. I wonder if I will reconnect to my teacher identity on a school landscape when I retire. If I decide not to return to school, I wonder what will replace my teacher identity in retirement. As I move closer to the event, I continue to ask questions and have wonders.

Other Wonders

Stories of retiring from teaching prompt me to envision my own story of retiring. Stories cause me to think about the context in which teachers retire and of the difference a changed context would make in a teacher's decision to retire. I continue to think about what it is that a retired teacher experiences when he or she returns to the school landscape. I wonder about possibilities to present to a retired teacher that would invite him or her to return to the school landscape. I wonder about "light-hearted" comments that some retired teachers make about retirement. Comments like "everyday is Saturday" or "retirement is for everyone" cause me to question whether such comments are made to impress others about the rewards of retirement or to cover up fear or anxiety the newly retired teacher has about being retired. My wonders continue.

Being of Age

Now that I have come of age, I am eligible to retire. Whether I choose to retire from teaching in the near future or stay teaching, I understand that my story to live by will continue to be composed. I find strength in Bateson's (1989) description of composing a life. She helps me see that as I engage in composing my own life, I learn that I am not on a pilgrimage to some fixed goal. Instead, I can be open to possibilities, to the discovery of new and inclusive patterns of meaning so that when paths disappear and I am faced with the problem of finding a new path, I can continue to forge ahead to a sense of a new identity.

I am hopeful that I will be able to continue to grow and change as I move off the professional knowledge landscape into retirement. Previous experience of change may help me to adapt as I leave the landscape that has been central to my identity. More

importantly, the stories the participants told will be remembered as I navigate my own journey from teaching to retirement. I am grateful to Frank, Lorraine and Noreen for sharing their stories. They have helped me to look for new paths and to be open to the recomposing of my story to live by in retirement.

This inquiry is not a finished story. It is a story that will continue as I look ahead and wonder what will happen as the years continue to unfold for the participants and for myself. I wonder what else I could learn from these narratives of experience.

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